



LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS

823
D 932 h
v. 1

3 vols

HELEN TREVERYN



HELEN TREVERYAN

OR

THE RULING RACE

BY

JOHN ROY

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I

London

MACMILLAN AND CO.

AND NEW YORK

1892



3
17432 L
v. 1

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

	PAGE
THE TREVERYANS OF LANEITHIN	1

CHAPTER II

CHANGE OF SCENE	19
---------------------------	----

CHAPTER III

THE LANGLEYS OF WRENTHAM	25
------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER IV

GUY LANGLEY LEAVES ENGLAND	40
--------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER V

THE THIRTIETH LANCERS	46
---------------------------------	----

CHAPTER VI

OUTWARD BOUND	56
-------------------------	----

CHAPTER VII

SYNTIA	70
------------------	----

How Passes Ray 5 July 53 Dickering and Chatto: 3 v.

CHAPTER VIII

	PAGE
SOME MORNING CALLS	85

CHAPTER IX

AN INDIAN COLD WEATHER	111
----------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER X

CHRISTMAS WEEK	125
--------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XI

THE PROCLAMATION OF THE EMPIRE	138
--	-----

CHAPTER XII

MR. PITT WRIGHT	155
---------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XIII

THE DIE IS CAST	172
---------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XIV

SUSPENSE	184
--------------------	-----

CHAPTER XV

ENGAGED	201
-------------------	-----

CHAPTER XVI

GUY WRITES HOME	217
---------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XVII

	PAGE
THE NEWS ARRIVES AT WRENTHAM	234

CHAPTER XVIII

THE BEGINNING OF TROUBLE	243
------------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XIX

TRYING TO DO RIGHT	261
------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER I

THE TREVERYANS OF LANEITHIN

UPON a weather-beaten headland, at one of the most inaccessible points of the southern coast of Cornwall, stands the old parish church of St. Erroc. Even now there is no railway within several miles of it; and the parish is perhaps as isolated and old-fashioned as any in England. Its southern boundary is formed by a line of rugged cliffs, with one or two difficult landing-places which can be approached only when the wind is off shore. To the north is rough moorland, overgrown with gorse and the beautiful Cornish heath; and beyond the moorland are the bare treeless hills, eternally swept by the winds of the Atlantic. The parish consists of several scattered hamlets and farms at some distance from the church, which stands on high ground with some trees and a village clustering round it. The tall slender spire is a conspicuous landmark for ships at sea. The principal house in St. Erroc is the old manor-house of Laneithin, a substantial building of gray stone, which stands in a

wooded hollow near the edge of the moorland, about two miles from the sea. From an architectural point of view Laneithin is not beautiful or otherwise worthy of remark; but it is a fair specimen of a Cornish country-house, and in its way picturesque enough. About it are some clumps of fine trees; and from one side a deep glen runs down to a cove among the cliffs.

Forty years ago Laneithin was occupied by John Treveryan, generally known as the Squire, whose family had held the house, and some good land round it, since the days of the Tudors. John Treveryan had, when a young man, served for a time in the army; but he had retired on succeeding to his estate, and had soon afterwards married a very fair and very charming lady, who shared his Cornish home for nearly thirty years. When she died she was very deeply mourned, not only by her husband, but by the whole population of that wild district of farmers and fishermen. Of her children Margaret, the eldest, was then with her father. A son, Erroc, had entered the army, and gone to India with his regiment. A second daughter had married the curate of the neighbouring church of St. Kerle's, and had afterwards left the county.

After Mrs. Treveryan's death her husband seemed for a time quite broken by his loss. People pitied the 'poor old Squire,' and said he would never be the same man again. Perhaps he never was the same man again. But as time went on, it was found that

John Treveryan had by no means done with life. When the violence of his grief abated, the Squire began once more to show an interest in what was passing around him; and after a year or two he was again to all appearances as cheery as ever. His daughter managed his house for him exceedingly well, and was soon as popular as her mother had been. In the sunshine of her love and care the Squire seemed content and even happy.

He was a singularly fine-looking man; tall and powerful, with a high-bred regular face and taking manners, hearty but courteous. His complexion and his blue eyes were clear and bright; and his reddish hair was still thick and almost untouched by gray. The broad rounded forehead and slightly aquiline nose, and the straight strongly-marked eyebrows, gave evidence of talent and character. Those eyebrows, rather broad than heavy, were the distinctive feature of the Treveryans. They were to be found in almost every one of the family pictures. The Squire shaved all but his whiskers, showing a mobile well-cut mouth, and a rather prominent underlip and chin. A handsomer man one could hardly see.

Unfortunately the Squire was not free from some dangerous qualities. He had a strong will, with undeniable talent and originality of mind; but his judgment was not altogether trustworthy, and his reckless disregard for money had often been a trouble to his wife. It was not extravagance of the ordinary type.

He spent little on horses, or shooting, or dress, or wine, or any of the usual luxuries. He rarely drank anything but water, and though he had a magnificent appetite he liked the plainest of food; and in every way his tastes were very simple. But he seemed to look upon money as a worthless thing, to be given away with the most lavish generosity if any one wanted it, and to be spent without limit or calculation upon any object which might for the moment have aroused his interest. Hitherto the steady common sense of his wife had kept him within bounds; but now that she was gone he began to give himself more rein, and to enter upon schemes of which she would certainly have disapproved.

Margaret Treveryan had all her father's good looks, and much of her mother's capacity; but she was still comparatively young, and, moreover, she did not know all that was going on. So, having no check upon him, John Treveryan began to get through his money a great deal faster than he could afford to do. He rebuilt two or three farmhouses, which were certainly in bad repair, and amused himself by making them examples of what in his opinion farmhouses should be. The work afforded him a great deal of pleasure, and in a sense he did it very well; but the result was that the homely Cornish farmers found themselves absurdly overhoused, and that a good many thousands were sunk without the smallest return. Then the Squire, who read largely and had an active mind,

took to buying novelties in the way of agricultural machinery. Each fresh toy was more wonderful than the last, and each was in turn thrown aside and forgotten, and each cost money. The Squire had also a taste for mechanical invention ; and he indulged it without regard for expense. He set up a small workshop in the house, and used to turn out very creditable models, which went off to London or elsewhere to be developed. They were useless, but they were very ingenious, and they helped to get rid of the sovereigns.

After a time Margaret Treveryan began to see that her father's inventions were more clever than practical, and that the money must be going very fast ; but her hesitating half-playful attempt at remonstrance met with no success. The Squire told her with a good-humoured smile that she did not understand anything about the matter ; that it always paid to do things in the best possible way ; and that he was determined to develop the estate to the utmost. Ten years after Mrs. Treveryan's death he had developed the estate to such an extent that he had got through all his ready money, and was beginning to borrow. And there was nothing whatever to show for it.

In the meantime the Squire had become a grandfather. Erroc Treveryan had married, soon after his arrival in India, the only child of the General commanding the division. Mary Ford was a gentle pretty girl, and made him a good wife ; but she and her children suffered severely from the climate. Two of

them died before they were a year old ; and when the terrible storm of the Mutiny broke upon our countrymen in India, the third child, a lovely little fair-haired girl, eighteen months of age, was beginning to look white and fragile. It was a fearful time for the ladies and children. Mary Treveryan in common with others was separated from her husband, whose regiment was sent up to the disturbed districts. She remained for a time in Calcutta, and there gave birth to a fourth child which only lived a few hours. The poor mother, worn out with grief and anxiety, very nearly followed it ; but at last she grew a little stronger ; and then, very pale and wasted, she gave way to her husband's request and sailed for England. His one desire was to know that she and little Helen were safe at Laneithin.

They arrived in the early autumn, after a trying voyage in the monsoon, and the Squire went all the way up to Plymouth to meet them. He received them with a warmth and affection which completely won their hearts. Nothing could be good enough for them. He had engaged the best suite of rooms to be got at the best hotel, and had tipped the servants all round to a perfectly ridiculous extent ; and he ordered sumptuous meals for them, and tried hard to make his daughter-in-law drink champagne three or four times a day ; and was generally charming and troublesome. As for the child, he idolised her from the first moment he saw her ; and she evidently understood the position.

It was pretty to see them together—the tiny dainty child, and the old man with his massive frame and powerful limbs. She was not the least afraid of him, and he was never tired of playing with her, and teasing and petting her.

When he considered that they were sufficiently rested, he took them on to Cornwall. There was a reserved compartment in the train for Mrs. Treveryan and Helen, who could not of course be crowded up with other people. ‘Expense, my dear? What is a few shillings compared with your comfort? Money is given us to spend.’ At Laneithin Erroc’s wife and child found another warm welcome. Margaret was at the door as soon as the carriage drove up, and her face was a welcome in itself. It was a thoroughly good face, handsome and honest and kindly; and both mother and child took to it at once.

They remained at Laneithin a year, the strong Cornish air doing wonders for little Helen; and then Mrs. Treveryan insisted upon returning to India. The country was quieting down, and Erroc wrote that he hoped she would soon be able to rejoin him. She would go out to Calcutta again and wait there on the chance.

It was a cruel wrench. Helen was three years old now, and as pretty a child as one could wish to see, and she was the only one. It was bitter to think of leaving her, even at Laneithin. ‘In a few months

she will have forgotten me,' the poor mother said to herself, with an aching heart; 'she will never really be mine again.' During that last sad fortnight, Mary Treveryan's wistful eyes followed the child unceasingly. Then the day of parting came; a dark wet October day, with a high wind from the sea; and Mary Treveryan kissed for the last time the sweet serious baby face, unfastened the little arms from her neck, and went away into the wind and the rain of the lonely Cornish roads.

Do you ever think what those partings mean, you happy English mothers? They are going on around you every day. Do you ever think what it is to hand over to others, perhaps to neglect and unkindness, the children you would die for, and to go away out of their lives? It is part of the price England pays for her Indian Empire; part of the cruel tale of blood and tears. But it is not you who pay, so it matters nothing to you. Stay at home in comfort, and thank God that you are not as other women are.

A year later Mary Treveryan was at rest for ever. She lived to rejoin her husband, and to spend a few happy months with him; and then she was laid in her grave, with a tiny dead form by her side.

After her death Erroc Treveryan remained some time longer in India. He was then holding an important post. During the Mutiny he had been selected for service with a corps of irregular cavalry which was being organised, and before the end of the campaign

he was commanding it. The work suited him well, and he speedily became a marked man. When the fighting was over, Treveryan, now a Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel, was offered the charge of a district which had been one of the centres of disaffection; and, as the appointment seemed to offer a fine opening, he accepted it. At that time the nation appeared to be deeply interested in Indian affairs; and it was supposed that the transfer from the Company to the Crown was the inauguration of a new and splendid era. Treveryan did not foresee how soon India would be forgotten again, and how completely he was cutting himself off by entering upon an Indian career.

Once he had taken up his new duties he found he could not leave his post for some time; and it was not until eighteen months after his wife's death that he at last obtained furlough and returned to England.

His child was then nearly six years old. She was a pretty little girl, with large serious gray eyes and dainty ladylike ways; but apparently as strong as a child could be. The race had touched its mother earth, and was springing up again, healthy and vigorous. Helen tyrannised over her grandfather, and was spoilt by every one in St. Erroc except Margaret Treveryan, whose hand was as firm as it was gentle. The child obeyed her to the letter, and thought her quite faultless.

Helen was very gracious to her father. She took him by the hand and introduced him to everything

and everybody at Laneithin; to the servants and the garden, and the horses, and the cows, and the pigs, and to her big retriever Dash, and to the turkeys and ducks and fowls, and all the surroundings of her country home. She had inherited the Treveryan love for animals, and her aunt had strongly encouraged it; so that Helen was on terms of fearless intimacy with every beast and bird in the place. Horses that could have eaten her picked the bread gently from her tiny palm, and rubbed their heads on her shoulder when she went to them in their boxes: the ducks waddled out of their pool under the ash tree when she passed by; and Dash would have died for her a hundred times over.

Sometimes Helen took her father out in the yacht. The Treveryans had sailed the Cornish coast for many generations, and they had some stirring traditions of war and adventure at sea. Helen was to the manner born, and delighted in being afloat. The *Dreadnought* was a handy little cutter of about fifteen tons, fit for getting into and out of all sorts of places; and her captain, James Tregenza, was a steady old sea-dog who knew every inch of the coast from Plymouth to the Land's End. He belonged to the little village at Carne cove, and was a fisherman by early training; but he had served in the navy. Tregenza loved the 'little lady' as much as if she had been his own child, and was never so happy as when he had got her on board.

It was a thoroughly healthy life, and the father and daughter spent a happy summer; though with him there was always present the sense of his loss. If only he could have seen them together, the little graceful child and the soft-eyed patient mother, who had loved her so dearly, and left her for his sake. To him life could never be very bright again. Erroc was anxious too about his father. Margaret had told him of her doubts as to money matters; and he soon saw that she had some cause for them. However, it was very pleasant to be together, and for all at Laneithin the time passed happily until the autumn, when Erroc went back to India.

For the next eight or nine years Helen remained at Laneithin, living a quiet country life, and learning from 'Aunt Madge' nothing but what was good. Margaret Treveryan was, like her mother, a well-educated and accomplished woman; and her influence and teaching were just what a girl required. Helen grew up straight and strong, in body and mind, with refined feelings and tastes, and a complete want of affectation. Aunt Madge taught her to be courteous and considerate to all men, and to all living things: to birds, and beasts, and flowers. She imbued Helen with her own gentleness of thought, and with her own chivalrous old-world pride in all that was good and noble. She taught her to be proud of the Treveryans who fought so well for King Charles; to be proud of Cornwall; to be proud above all of England, and the

great things England has done. She taught her that cowardice was dishonourable, even in a woman; and that anything like deceit was cowardly, and therefore beneath her—beneath a Treveryan. She taught her in fact to be, in the truest and fullest sense of the word, a lady. And she taught her to fear and worship God. A woman without religion is hardly a woman. As for the less important matters which are generally called education, Helen got on well enough. It was difficult in Cornwall to get masters, but she was still young; and with the help of a good governess she learned as much as most girls learn in the school-room. She had decided talent for music, like most of her family, and promised to sing well.

At fifteen she was a graceful and beautiful girl; a child still in many ways, and rather impetuous in thought and speech, but very taking. She could walk, and ride, and row, and she could steer the *Dreadnought* on a wind very nearly as well as old Tregenza; and yet she was above all things gentle and warm-hearted. From her babyhood she had possessed the peculiar charm of manner which makes some women attract all around them. Added to her good looks and her real goodness of heart, that charm was irresistible. The man had no music in his soul who could see Helen Treveryan for five minutes and not love her. Even Tregenza's two troublesome boys, the wildest young scamps that ever sailed a boat, would do anything for the little lady who lectured them and got

them out of their scrapes. And in all the hospitable houses of the most hospitable county in England Helen Treveryan's face was as welcome as the day. It was a very happy girlhood.

In the meantime, however, things had been going from bad to worse with the Squire. As he got more involved, he seemed to grow more reckless, and larger in his views, and more irritable in temper. To Helen he was always kind; but at times he spoke sharply to his daughter, who was obliged to trouble him for money. He got a worried look too, and lost some of his old heartiness of manner. A year or two after Colonel Treveryan left England the old man opened a quarry which was going to make all their fortunes. It failed of course, after a considerable sum had been sunk in getting out stone and constructing a tramway. The place was inaccessible, and the same stone could be shipped much cheaper elsewhere.

For some time after that the Squire was more careful. He used to sit and make models in his workshop, or go out sailing with his daughter and Helen. They were very happy then. He was so cheery and handsome and good; like a big courteous boy, full of fun and mischief. He even went so far as to admit that he had been imprudent about money matters, and promised to be very cautious in future. Unfortunately the fit did not last. Margaret saw that he was getting absorbed again in some scheme about which he would not talk. He was carrying on a brisk

correspondence ; and once or twice he went away for a day or two.

At last she heard what had happened from a woman in the village, who spoke as if the thing were generally known. The Squire's curiosity had been aroused by the chance discovery of a disused and overgrown mine-shaft on the edge of the moor. He had set to work to search the ground ; and had almost immediately found what he expected. Now he was convinced that it only required a little money to open at St. Erroc one of the richest tin mines in Cornwall. He would soon be worth millions.

The Squire said nothing to his daughter. He knew she should be afraid of the scheme ; and he did not want to be discouraged. ' They will all believe in me when I have done the thing,' he thought ; ' they will see the old man was right then. Meanwhile it is no use saying anything about it.' Margaret did not press him, but she grew more anxious as the weeks went on.

The district was notoriously a bad one from a mining point of view ; and the practical experts who came down to examine the Squire's discovery looked doubtful, and showed no inclination to help him. Their caution, or, as he called it, their stupidity, only made him more obstinate. He was not going to be put off like that. His indignation incited him to tell Margaret about it ; and she begged him to be very careful, which annoyed him. He went away for a week, and returned one evening in great spirits, bringing with

him a pale, thickset, hook-nosed man, with a big head and broad shoulders, and a slight foreign accent, whom he introduced to his daughter as Dr. Stein, and described as 'an Austrian mining fellow, who knew all about it. Come down to see that find of mine, you know. He's got a head on his shoulders, and saw through the jealousy of the other fellows at once.'

During the summer of 1870, while all Europe rang with the clash of arms, the end came at Laneithin. Pushed on by Dr. Stein, the old Squire had got together every halfpenny that he could raise, and had practically put the whole in the hands of his guest. A considerable sum was really spent on the spot. The greater part Stein professed to be spending in London, promoting a company. This required a heavy outlay; but everything was going well. Success was certain.

One morning at breakfast the Squire received a letter which he opened eagerly. As he read his face grew white, and an awful change came over it. Margaret looked at him in alarm.

'What is it, father?' she said anxiously.

The old man stood up, and a hoarse inarticulate sound broke from him. The letter dropped on the table, and he made two vain attempts to pick it up again. Margaret and Helen were by his side at once, and Helen picked up the letter and gave it to him. He could not speak, but he raised his left hand to his mouth, and then tried to walk out of the room.

With the help of the servants they got him upstairs, and sent for the doctor, who came two hours later.

It was a paralytic stroke. Dr. Carlyon hoped all might yet go well. In the meantime there was to be no mention of business, nothing to excite or worry the sick man. Alas! he bore his death-wound in his heart. He never lost consciousness, and after the doctor had gone he succeeded in making Margaret understand that she was to read the letter. As she did so, he lay watching her face with eyes of pathetic anguish.

It was a cruel letter: Dr. Stein curtly informed the Squire that he had failed in his efforts, that the money was all spent, and that he was leaving England at once. There was hardly an attempt at further concealment.

Margaret put down the letter and looked at her father. His mouth was trembling, and the look in his eyes was more than she could bear. 'Never mind, father dear,' she said. 'It will all come right. Don't worry yourself about it. It's only a little money. What does that matter?'

He shook his head despairingly. He knew it was hopeless. In the presence of Death the Revealer many things became suddenly clear to him. He lived only a few weeks longer. For a time he recovered in a measure the use of his speech, and his head seemed clear; but he would accept no consolation. He had

ruined them all, and his self-reproach was sad to see. While his son was on the seas speeding homeward, hoping to see him once more, the old Squire was stricken again and died. The end came quietly; they hardly knew when it was over. He was laid among his own people, under the shadow of St. Erroc spire; and all who had known him were sorry for his death. He had lived long among them, with a handsome face, and an open hand, and a kindly heart.

When Colonel Treveryan came he found things even worse than he had feared. How his father had succeeded in raising such sums of money he could not understand. One thing was clear, that with the utmost efforts, by letting the house and saving every penny he could save henceforward, he could hardly hope in his lifetime to discharge the debt; and, meanwhile, if he died his sister and child would be almost destitute. It was ruin, complete and crushing.

While he was reflecting sadly over the position, he received an offer which gave him a chance of getting out of his difficulties. A rich landowner of the neighbourhood, who could afford to pay a fancy price for anything he wanted, came forward at this moment with a proposal to buy Laneithin. At first Erroc Treveryan shrank from the idea with something like horror. Laneithin had been in the family nearly three hundred years. He could not let it go. As he thought on, however, the thing assumed a different aspect. The price offered was very large, much more than he could

have hoped to get ; and after all what would he gain by refusing it ? They could never live at Laneithin, any of them, and he had no son to keep up the name. Was it right in the interest of the others to refuse the offer ? The brother and sister talked it all over together, with many fluctuations of feeling ; and at last they agreed that it would be wisest to accept. The old home must go. It was hard, cruelly hard ; but it was the right thing to do.

So Laneithin passed away to other hands, and the name of Treveryan disappeared from St. Erroc. Henceforth their place would know them no more.

CHAPTER II

CHANGE OF SCENE

WHEN Laneithin had been sold, Colonel Treveryan went back to his work in India, and his sister took Helen abroad. France and Germany were locked in their death-struggle, so Helen and her aunt went first to Italy, where they spent a very pleasant year. A complete change was the best thing for both of them; and the education would be good for Helen. They had with them one old Laneithin servant—Miss Treveryan's maid Power, a little brown-eyed woman who loved her mistress from the bottom of her honest heart, and had petted and spoilt Helen ever since she first saw her. She followed them now, and would have followed them to the world's end.

Altogether, in Italy and Switzerland and France, and finally in Germany, they spent four years. Once, for a few months, Colonel Treveryan joined them, and they had a delightful summer about the Swiss lakes. He was very proud of his daughter now. She grew prettier every year, and her voice was delightful; yet she was just as unaffected and natural as a child. It

was settled during his visit that when she was nineteen she should go out to him in India, and that Aunt Madge should go too. But when the time drew near, the doctors interfered. Since they had left Laneithin, Margaret Treveryan's health had never seemed so strong as before, and lately she had suffered acute pain from some affection of the heart. She was now forbidden to leave Europe, and Helen had to go alone.

She went with a painful conflict of feeling. She had learned to love her father during his visits to Europe; but Aunt Madge had been everything to her since she was a baby. It was hard to leave her, even to go to him; and it was doubly hard to leave her in failing health. Aunt Madge was very firm. 'No, dear,' she said. 'Your first duty is to your father. Don't ever let him know you had the slightest hesitation about it. I shall miss you of course; but think how lonely his life has been for the last ten years.'

'But you are not well. You ought not to be left alone.'

Aunt Madge smiled. 'I can take care of myself, and Power will take care of me. I might live for twenty or thirty years. You could not stay with me indefinitely because I am not perfectly well.'

A few weeks later Helen had said good-bye and sailed for India, and Aunt Madge had settled down in a tiny house at Torquay, where she had been advised to go. It was a very tiny house, for she was troubled at being a burden on her brother; and it was lonely.

Her sister had died long before, leaving only two sons, who had grown up anything but agreeable. Their father was a rough, rather coarse-bred man ; and they seemed to have taken after him entirely. There was nothing of the Treveryan in them. In the old times they had come once or twice to Laneithin ; but they were not nice boys, and Aunt Madge did not think them good companions for Helen. There was no one else belonging to the family.

However, Aunt Madge had not long to endure her solitude. She began to lose strength fast. She seemed to feel that her work was over ; and though she was brave and cheerful to the end, she had no wish to live. A year after Helen left her she was gone.

It was not until then that they knew how ill she had been. She would never let Power tell them ; and her last letter was as beautifully written as ever, and as full of brightness and interest in their doings. She died as she had lived, thinking of others. It was one of those lives which are so hard to understand. As a girl Margaret Treveryan seemed to have been given everything which could make life sweet : beauty, talent, education, charm of manner, a true warm heart. Then, at two-and-twenty, the man she loved was taken from her by a miserable accident ; and from that time she never seemed to think of herself. In making others happy she found contentment ; but it seemed a waste somehow, a waste of love and beauty, and capacity for happiness.

In the meantime Helen had settled down in her Indian home. Colonel Treveryan was now in a prominent position, and she had to manage his house for him. It was difficult work at first, while everything was strange to her; but she soon learnt enough Hindustani to make herself understood by the servants, and the other ladies helped her over her early troubles. Before she had been two years in India, Colonel Treveryan's house was everything it should have been; and her presence had brightened his life to an extent which he could never have believed possible. People said he had grown young again.

She was very happy too. Her father's one aim was to make her so; and she had everything the heart of a girl could desire. She had learnt to know him thoroughly now, and she loved him as much as if they had always been together; she could hardly believe at times that they had not. It was a delight to her to be with him and work for him; to surround him with care and comfort; to relieve him of all petty worries; and to make his house pleasant for his many guests. He had cleared off all the Squire's debts by this time, and there was plenty of money for everything; so she was free from that most wearing of troubles, the anxiety about ways and means. The difficulty was to prevent her father from spending too much on her and her pleasures. He had given her the best Arab horse he could get; and had brought out for her all the way from England a beautiful deer-

hound, which was a real delight to her; and he was constantly trying to find out something she wanted. It was not very prudent perhaps, for his income would die with him; but he was so fond and proud of her, and it was the Indian way to be open-handed. We have changed all that now. The Indian Services are half ruined by the fall in the value of silver, and the old open-handedness is dying out fast; but it was the fashion then.

One Sunday evening in the month of September, a small party of guests were gathered round Colonel Treveryan's dinner-table. It was an understood thing in the hot weather that any one who liked to come in after evening-church could do so; and generally three or four men availed themselves of the chance. That night some of the officers of a Hussar regiment which was quartered at Syntia had driven over from cantonments.

The regiment was to be relieved two months later; and the conversation at dinner turned upon this subject. They began talking about the Thirtieth Lancers, who were coming to Syntia in their place; and Colonel Treveryan said he knew Colonel Aylmer, who commanded; they had served together in the Mutiny. One name after another was mentioned, and then a Major Hodgson said: 'The only one I know well is young Guy Langley. He comes from my part of the country. You are sure to like him. He is a real good boy; does everything well; and a handsome fellow too.'

‘I have met him. He’s a good-looking fellow,’ another man said; ‘but he puts on a lot of side, doesn’t he?’

‘Oh no. He doesn’t mean it. He really is a very nice young chap. It’s only the Thirtieth swagger.’

Helen sat listening in silence. ‘I shan’t like *him*,’ she thought; and she pictured to herself a conceited young gentleman with a supercilious manner. She had seen some like that, and objected to them strongly.

But Guy Langley was not like that. The idea one forms of a man from the casual conversation of others is often curiously incorrect.

CHAPTER III

THE LANGLEYS OF WRENTHAM

THE Langleys of Wrentham Hall in the county of Warwick were a good old family, with some reason to be proud of themselves. They were not the original occupants of the Hall, which, like most of our English country houses, had changed hands more than once. The Langleys bought it from a family of the name of Blunt, who were ruined, like many others, in the disgraceful days of Charles the Second; when the Dutch were burning our ships in the Thames, and Society was gambling and drinking at Whitehall. John Langley, the first of the name at Wrentham, was a London merchant, who had made a fortune in the Eastern trade, and had been knighted by the King in return for a loan of which nothing was ever more heard. Sir John rebuilt the Hall, which was then a picturesque Elizabethan house, or rather he added to it. The original house was left standing, but the court and subsidiary buildings were cleared away from the front, and in their place arose a lofty façade of stone, with narrow windows and pointed gables. From this

block two wings were carried backwards to meet the projecting wings of the old house, and the whole building thus assumed the shape of a square, the original porch and front looking across a flagged courtyard into the back of the new block. Taking a hint from what he had found at Wrentham, Sir John then threw out a stone portico in front of his new main door, and a walled court in front of the portico. A panel in the great stone gateway bore the representation of a chained leopard instead of the bull's head of the Blunts, which was relegated to a smaller gateway on the right of the court, leading into the garden. The stables were rebuilt just outside the court, also to the right, an iron gateway giving access from the court to the stable-yard. Sir John Langley had been struck by the hall of the old house, with its mullioned windows and high oak paneling, and this he determined to reproduce. His new front door was therefore made to open into a large panelled hall, at one end of which was a wide fireplace of the ancient type, and at the other end a broad oak stair leading to the rooms above. For the sake of warmth the front door was covered by a small inner porch or anteroom, which projected into the hall, breaking the stiff outline of the walls and forming two pleasant recesses to right and left of the entrance. From each of these recesses a broad carved window with cushioned seats looked out upon the court.

A walled garden lay to the right of the house, sloping gently towards a stream a hundred paces dis-

tant. This stream turned in its course a little lower down, and the road leading from the Hall to the village of Wrentham crossed it by a massive stone bridge.

After the time of Sir John, Wrentham remained substantially unchanged. The walls became mellowed in colouring, and covered in parts with lichen and moss and ivy; the oaken stairs and panelling grew darker and darker; the garden-wall was levelled, and the old enclosed garden gave place to a smooth sloping lawn dotted with fine trees; while flower-beds and shady walks and hothouses gradually grew into being beyond the stream; finally, a considerable extent of country round the house was enclosed and turned into a park, full of grassy mounds and grand old trees and pleasant glades, which ran up into the bracken and underwood of the pheasant covers. But substantially the Hall remained as Sir John Langley had built it, only improved by the hand of Time, and the loving care of successive generations of occupants. As a specimen of architecture it was very far from perfect, and at times a stranger might have thought it somewhat gloomy; but in spring or summer, when the lawns were smooth and trim, and the flower-beds bright with colour, and the great oaks and beeches in their glory, a man would have been hard to please who could find fault with such a home. It was a thoroughly English house, such as no country but England can show, and fit to be the cradle of a sturdy English race.

The Langleys were worthy of their birthplace.

They could not boast of a chivalrous descent, and they had made no great mark in history; but they had given to their country a fair number of stout soldiers and honest country gentlemen, and in their own part of England their name stood high. At the same time the family was not wealthy. Since the days of Sir John the Langleys had never made money, or largely increased their possessions by marriage. The younger sons had been obliged to seek their living all over the world, very much to their own advantage and that of the world as well.

That evening in September 1876, when the little Sunday party were sitting round Colonel Treveryan's table at Syntia, the sun was still bright in the English sky. It was one of those clear exquisite days of early autumn when the north wind brings with it a gentle warning of the dark days to come.

The Langleys were gathered about the open hall door in readiness for their usual Sunday ramble across the fields. They were a handsome family. Charles Langley, the master of the house, was fully sixty years of age, but he was still a man to be envied as he stood there among his sons, straight and broad-shouldered and powerful, with the clear eyes and fresh complexion which can only be kept by a healthy country life. His wife stood near him, a tall graceful woman, with a determined face. Lady Mary Langley was the granddaughter of a successful lawyer, whose abilities had won him a peerage. His son, the second

peer, had rendered some service to his party, and had been rewarded with an earldom. When he died in his turn he left behind him a son who succeeded to the title, and a daughter, Lady Mary, who inherited little in the way of money, but a large share of the pertinacity and rather imperious temper which had distinguished her father and grandfather.

When she married Charles Langley he was a Captain and Lieutenant-Colonel in the Guards, and one of the best-looking men in the service. She never rested until she induced him to leave the army, for which he was in some respects well fitted, and to enter upon a political career, for which, as he well knew, he was not fitted at all. She succeeded in getting him into the House, but there her success ended. He detested the life, and was beyond measure pleased when, after a couple of years of weary drudgery, he was beaten at the general election by a Radical candidate. Nothing would induce him to stand again; it was, he said, worse than being in jail. There at least you got regular meals and a good night's rest; in the House you got neither. Lady Mary did her utmost to rouse him to a sense of what she described as his duty, but on this point he was immovable; and at last, with many secret tears of mortification and anger, she was forced to recognise her defeat. She had spoilt a good soldier in Charles Langley, and she could make nothing else of him.

The two girls, Barbara and Evelyn, had much of

their mother's gracefulness, but with more of the Langley type, the fair hair and blue eyes which were so common in the family pictures. They looked well in their trim gray ulsters and honest walking-boots; and they were thoroughly good girls, well mannered and sensible if not highly accomplished. Their brothers were like them and each other, though not cast in the same mould. Henry, the eldest, was a typical Langley in face and figure, with his father's broad shoulders and fair colouring. He had unfortunately married when at Oxford a woman of humble extraction some years older than himself. Husband and wife were now separated, and there were no children of the marriage. It had been a severe blow to Lady Mary, who could have forgiven almost anything sooner than this; and poor Harry, who was a good fellow at bottom, found himself so uncomfortable at Wrentham that he did not care to come down very often. He lived by himself on his allowance, which was liberal, hunting a little and shooting a good deal, and getting through his time with tolerable satisfaction to himself and not much harm to any one else. Guy, the second son, of whom they were talking in India, had been three years in the army. There was perhaps a touch of swagger about his manner, which was, however, singularly pleasant and winning; and his tall clean-cut figure was topped by a well-shaped head and handsome face. He was like his mother; but his features, though

regular, were not so determined in their expression. Guy was the best looking and cleverest of the Langleys, and the most popular with men and women. Finally, there was Roland, the youngest son, a good-looking young fellow too, but perhaps at that time the least attractive of the family. He was only a couple of years younger than Guy, but he had always been more or less delicate, and the difference seemed to be much greater. Roland had done better at school than either of his brothers, and had left Eton with a certain conceit about him which Oxford was not eradicating. Guy disapproved of the tone Roland had brought back from college; and expressed his disapproval with candour. 'Ro, you are an infernal young prig,' he said; 'you ought to go back to Jones's and get it swished out of you. I thought you would come to a bad end when you began to bring back all those beastly prizes. You won't do us any credit if you go on like this.' And Guy had set to work in a good-humoured but very scientific manner to 'take Ro down a peg.' However, Roland was an affectionate boy, with the makings of a man in him, and if he was inclined to be priggish he had some excuse. He had been the most prominent oppidan at Eton; and his tutor, a very distinguished classical scholar, who thought the highest thing in life was to be a school-master or a college don, had said to him at parting, 'Well, Langley, I am glad your people recognise that *you* are too good to be wasted on the army.'

Most families fall into natural subdivisions, and the Langleys were no exception to the rule. Harry and Barbara had always been firm allies. Evelyn and Roland, though given to sparring with each other, never failed to present an unbroken front to an external enemy. Guy, who came between the two pairs, was a general favourite, but he was from the beginning his mother's boy and had taken all his childish confidences direct to her. Now it was his last day at Wrentham, and Lady Mary's eyes rested on him wistfully as he stood on the steps in the sunlight, his left arm carelessly linked in Evelyn's, and his face turned towards the stable, in front of which two or three dogs were barking madly and straining at their collars, hindering by their impatience the boy who was trying to loose them. A few seconds later they were racing across the courtyard, old Saxon, the deer-hound, a dozen lengths ahead ; and after a stormy greeting the party set out for their walk.

'Come with me, Guy,' his mother said, and she thought with a sudden pang that this was perhaps the last time, the last of so many since he had been a sunny-faced baby of four. How well she remembered his first Sunday afternoon walk, his pride at his promotion, and his scornful refusals to admit that he was tired. 'Twenty years ago,' she thought, and sighed. Then she repressed the feelings that were crowding upon her, and went on with an air of half-assumed disgust : 'You wretched boys ! Poisoning the pure air

of heaven with your horrid tobacco.' Guy laughed. It was an old subject of discussion between them, and had been a sore subject once; but Lady Mary, like a sensible woman, had yielded upon this point, and many others, when she found her sons growing out of leading-strings. 'You know you like it really, mother,' he said. 'I had hard work to educate you, and you must not be ungrateful.' She answered him with a smile, and they passed out together under the great stone gateway.

It was a walk both mother and son often thought of in after years. Away in India Guy would sit at times with a far-off look in his eyes, dreaming of the old home, and that afternoon seemed to come before him with special clearness. He could see the sunlight on the grass slopes, and the autumn tints on the trees, and he seemed to feel again the still cool air just touched with the scent of the coming winter. And his mother remembered it too, poor lady, gazing out upon the path they had trodden side by side, and longing, with a longing that was physical pain, for one look of those straight gray eyes and the ring of the cheery voice. The walk was rather a sad one. Charles Langley and his eldest son went on ahead, talking of the pheasants and the prospects of the hunting. Lady Mary spoke little. The young people laughed and chatted about the familiar objects they passed, but their laughter seemed a little out of tune, and once or twice the talk slackened into silence in a way that was unusual with that somewhat noisy family.

When their heads were turned homewards the breaks of silence became longer, and by the time they arrived at the Hall they all felt tired and depressed.

There remained a couple of hours before dinner, and Guy strolled off to spend a part of them in saying good-bye to his friends at the stables. He was a favourite with man and beast, and his welcome was a pleasant one. It was dark when he finished his chat with old James the coachman in the saddle-room, and knocked, as he had promised to do, at the door of his father's study. Charles Langley was sitting in a leather-covered armchair, with his feet on the fender, reading *The Field*. Early as it was a fire was agreeable. 'Well, Guy,' he said, as his son walked into the room and drew a chair up opposite to him, 'so you are off to-morrow.'

'Yes, father.'

'I wish you could have stayed in England a little longer; but you are quite right to stick to your regiment, though your mother does not agree with me there. I don't like to see a soldier shirking foreign service.'

'I wouldn't leave the regiment for anything in the world,' Guy answered warmly; and his father looked at him with approving eyes.

'You are all right about money?'

'Yes. I owe a little, but not more than I can manage.'

'That's right. It's a stupid thing to get into debt. All the same, you must have extra expenses just now,

and you may want something in India at first,' and he took a closed envelope from the table at his side and handed it over to his son.

'Thank you, father,' Guy said, 'I daresay I shall know what to do with it; but I told you I would manage on my allowance if you let me go into the cavalry. It has been rather a tight fit sometimes, but I have never troubled you, have I?'

'No, never. But I felt sure you would keep straight,' his father answered; 'and I am sure you always will, about everything else as well as money.'

Guy did not reply, and there was a pause which neither seemed able to break. Both would have liked to say something more, but both were embarrassed. Then Charles Langley put an end to the silence and the interview.

'Hallo,' he said, with a glance at the clock on his mantelpiece; 'it is time to dress for dinner. I did not know it was so late. I never heard the gong.'

Guy pushed back his chair slowly, stood for a moment in front of the fire, and then walked out of the room. As he passed behind the armchair, he laid his hand gently upon his father's shoulder. Charles Langley looked round with a smile and a nod, and then, as the door closed and the sound of Guy's footsteps died away down the passage, he sighed and stood up. He felt that they should have been more to one another; that in his indolence he had let the boy drift away from him. Now it was too late.

After dinner, as the Langleys sat round the great fireplace in the hall, the talk and the laughter were bright enough. It was a way they had in all but the coldest weather. The hall was a fine lofty room, the walls covered with trophies brought back by sporting or fighting Langleys for generations past. Great heads of moose and bison from America, the tapering twisted horns of Indian and African antelopes, and swords, spears, shields, and strange old firearms were mixed together overhead; while the polished wooden floor was half covered by the skins of tigers and leopards and bears. At either side of the projecting carved fireplace stood a figure in full armour, supposed to have been worn by some of the bygone Blunts. These motionless figures, with their closed helmets, were rather ghostly companions; but they had stood there ever since the days of Sir John, and the hall which they had so long guarded seemed to be the representative room of the house and the race. It was the room the Langleys dreamt of when they were away; and for the adornment of it the boys incurred many a hard day's work, and faced many a danger.

There they gathered to spend their last evening together. Charles Langley and Harry sat near a lamplit table reading, while the rest grouped themselves about the log-fire, Guy's long limbs stretched out across the bearskin hearthrug, and his head resting upon a cushion which he had comfortably disposed against his mother's knees. Nobody but Guy would have

dreamt of such a thing in that house, but Guy could do anything. For an hour or more the talk and the laughter went on, Lady Mary alone being silent, her hand moving softly at times about Guy's head. Then the bell in the courtyard suddenly rang out the summons to prayers. Guy got up, rather unwillingly, and they all passed into the inner room, where the servants were awaiting them. As they went Roland put into words the idea which had struck more than one of them. 'How dreary the old bell sounds to-night,' he said in a rather sentimental tone, 'as if it were tolling for Guy's departure.'

Evelyn turned upon him with sudden wrath. 'What an *idiot* you are, Ro,' she whispered savagely. 'Can't you see what it is to mother?' and he went to his seat feeling hurt but penitent.

Charles Langley read a few verses, and then they knelt and listened again to the beautiful evening collects, and rose, none the better perhaps some of them, but quieted and calmed by the solemn words. They generally gathered in the hall again when prayers were over, but that night Lady Mary could stand no more. 'You have to be up early,' she said, laying her hand on Guy's arm as the servants left the room; 'go and have your cigar, and come to my room for a minute when you are going to bed.'

So they broke up, the girls following their father and mother, and the young men going off to change their coats and assemble in their den in the east wing.

That night they did not stay long smoking. In less than an hour they parted ; Guy walking down the passage with his arm over Roland's shoulder. ' Good-night, Ro,' he said, as they stood by the door of their mother's room. ' Be a good boy, and don't think me a beast for sitting on you. It's my way, you know.' And then, as he caught a glimpse of the boy's face, he turned hastily round and knocked at the door.

When Guy left his mother an hour later he had realised more clearly perhaps than ever before the strength of her love for him. She spoke to him quietly, never breaking down for a moment, but he saw how hard it was to her ; and when at the last he lifted and kissed, as he used to do, a mass of the beautiful brown hair which hung down below her waist, she threw her arms round him with such a passionate cry that he was startled. ' Now go,' she said, with a sudden change of manner, and her ' good-night ' sounded hard and constrained.

Guy's room looked rather desolate with his little remaining luggage packed ready for the start, but he was young and had the world before him, and he was soon asleep. For an hour afterwards his mother sat before the fire thinking of all he had been to her. Now and then a smile came over her face, but for the most the steady brown eyes were very sad. At last she shivered and got up. The fire was almost out and the room felt cold. She walked across to her dressing-

table, and stopped a moment before it. Then she lifted up the mass of hair that Guy had kissed, and cut away a heavy tress. 'He will like to have it when he is away,' she said to herself, 'my own boy.'

CHAPTER IV

GUY LANGLEY LEAVES ENGLAND

THE London train which Guy wanted to catch left Wrentham Road before seven, and as the Hall was four miles from the station, the household was astir by candlelight.

Guy himself woke before the man came into his room with his clothes and hot water. He opened his eyes with a sense that something was to happen, and though his next thoughts were regretful, there was enough novelty in the prospect to make it not altogether unpleasant. He lay awake for a few minutes, thinking of the past and all his happy days at Wrentham, but thinking more of the future. He was young, and though there was in his nature a poetic element which made him quick to feel, yet youth and health and a cheerful temper preserved him from any morbid excess of depression, and he was not on the whole unhappy as he threw off his bedclothes. There was a blazing fire in the grate, for the nurse who had looked after him as a child, and was still in the Langleys' service, had come into the room an hour before and

made it up for him, determined that 'Master Guy' should be comfortable to the last.

Half an hour later he was in the dining-room, where he found the rest of the family, except his mother, assembled to see the last of him. It was a cold gray morning, and Guy felt little inclination to eat. With the faces of his brothers and sisters about him he had a sudden revulsion of feeling, and his heart sank as the thought came across him: 'I wonder when we shall all be here again together.' Roland had given expression to the same thought just before he came down, and the remark had been received in silence.

Now, in spite of his father's cheery voice, Guy felt low-spirited, and wished that it were all over. Yet he lingered, sipping his tea, and shrinking from the pain that he knew he must go through in his mother's room, until Charles Langley looked at his watch. 'I don't want to turn you out of the house,' he said, 'but I heard the dog-cart come round ten minutes ago, and you have not much time to say good-bye to your mother.'

Guy left the room and walked slowly upstairs. He had expected a painful parting, and painful in a sense it was; but she had nerved herself to go through it, and was resolved that no weakness on her part should make matters harder for him. He was conscious of a feeling of relief as he saw her standing ready to receive him, perfectly composed, with a smile on her face. 'I thought you were going off to India without coming near me,' she said, as he stooped and

kissed her. 'Now you must not stay long, or you will miss your train. I know that new mare Harry got for us takes a good deal longer to do it than old Tom Brown. I hope we shall have taught her to trot by the time you come back.' Then she took up a little packet off her dressing-table. 'Only some of my hair, Guy. I thought you would like to have it. God bless you, my boy. Good-bye.'

'Good-bye, mother dear. Don't be unhappy. I shall be back soon.'

She held him for a moment and looked in his face, as if to fix in her mind the remembrance of every line, then kissed him with a stifled sob, and let him go.

Three minutes later the wheels of Guy's dog-cart were crunching the gravel at the end of the courtyard. He hardly knew how he had got there; but as he drove through the gateway he looked back over his shoulder and saw his father and brothers on the steps under the porch, and the faces of the girls at the window by the side of it.

That day was a dreary one at the Hall. There was a general sense of slackness, and a disinclination to settle down to anything. Lady Mary did not appear till lunch-time, and then she looked white and spoke little. The afternoon dragged heavily, the more so that most of the family had got up in the morning some hours before their usual time. It was not until another night had passed over that things really began to go on again in their usual way.

It must be confessed that in the meantime Guy's spirits were not at a very low ebb. The rapid drive through the morning air was exhilarating. The new mare, though a little raw, and inclined to shy and break on small provocation, was a really well-bred one; and with a light cart behind her she got over the ground very creditably. Guy knew and liked a good horse, and it was a real pleasure to him to make the little chestnut go as she should go. By the time he arrived at the station they were on the best of terms, and he was thinking more of her trotting than of anything else. 'She will do, Charles,' he said to the groom, as he handed over the reins and got down. 'Take her home quietly. Good-bye. I shall be back in England before long, I expect.'

'Good-bye, sir. I hope you may, sir.'

The train was punctual, and Guy had not much more than enough time to get his ticket and see to his luggage, which had been sent on in advance. Somehow he never could travel, even for a day or two, without a large amount of it. He settled himself comfortably in the corner seat of an empty carriage, with his rug tucked round his legs, and early as it was lit a long cigar. Having fairly started it he sat back with a sigh of contentment, and began to think.

Naturally his mind soon reverted to his mother and her farewell. His eyes softened as he pictured her standing in her room, as he had last seen her. 'Dear old mother,' he thought, 'how plucky she was.'

Then he remembered the packet she had given him, and felt hastily in his pocket for it. He found it and took it out, and put it away in his dressing-case. That done he sat back again, and his thoughts gradually drifted away to other matters. Before the train reached Paddington they had travelled over a great variety of subjects, and on the whole with satisfaction to himself. He had every reason to be content with his condition in life. He was barely four-and-twenty, and in perfect health, with a large capacity for enjoyment, and nothing to prevent his taking full advantage of it. Compared with some of the other men in the regiment he was not well off; but one of his father's sisters had left him two hundred a year, and his father allowed him a similar sum, so that he could count on four hundred a year besides his pay. This was not wealth, but with care he could make it do. At the present moment he had in his dressing-case his father's cheque for a sum which would pay off all he owed and leave him a good balance in hand to start with. He liked the best of everything, and he had the instinctive open-handedness of the English gentleman; but he was not extravagant and rarely wasted money. He could therefore live in his regiment without discomfort. Good-looking and popular and heartwhole, with no serious cause of sorrow or self-reproach in his past life, how could he help being happy? Happy he was, and looked, as he stepped out on the platform at Paddington, and proceeded to gather his effects together

with the help of a porter, who had marked through the window his good-tempered face and generally prosperous appearance, and had at once set him down as 'good for a bob.'

The next few hours were spent in town. He had still to make one or two purchases to complete the outfit which he thought necessary for a residence in the East; and there were some solemn parting words to be said to the tailor and bootmaker whom he could not hope to see again for months or years. These and other farewell visits over, he made his way to Waterloo, and the same evening he found himself once more seated at the regimental mess.

Two or three days later Guy was standing on the quarter-deck of the *Ganges*, one of our Indian troopships, watching the English coast disappear in the haze as the great ship steamed away down channel towards the open sea. She bore away with her the Thirtieth Lancers, five hundred strong, and some drafts for other regiments, and a few stray officers who were going out to rejoin their several corps in India.

CHAPTER V

THE THIRTIETH LANCERS

THE Thirtieth Lancers was one of the most popular regiments in the service. Colonel Aylmer, who was taking it out to India, had the reputation of being an excellent commanding officer. Though a comparatively young man, little more than forty, he was by no means a young soldier. When a boy he had served in the Crimea, and had even then distinguished himself by his coolness and courage. Afterwards he had seen service in the Indian Mutiny and in China. He wore several medals and decorations, and among them the one which every true soldier covets above all—the Cross ‘for valour.’ He had won it in the dark days of 1857, by riding single-handed at a knot of native troopers who, in the confusion of a surprise, had surrounded and almost despatched an English officer. Colonel Aylmer was a fine-looking man, spare and soldierly, with a peculiarly attractive face and courteous manner. His heavy moustache and close-cropped hair were hardly touched with gray; and when in the saddle, with his easy seat and upright youthful figure,

he looked the model of a *sabreur*. As a cavalry leader he had few equals. He knew exactly what horsemen could do and what they could not do, and was as careful as he was bold.

The senior Major, 'Bob' Dangerfield, was a man of good abilities, and an exceptionally sound judge of a horse, but rather too heavy for a cavalry soldier. He was not however a bad officer, and he was popular in the regiment, for he was open-handed and good-natured. If he had been a little less fond of good living, and a little slighter about the waist, he would have been more efficient, but you cannot have everything. The junior Major was a big fighting Englishman, of the heavy dragoon type, with a huge yellow moustache and a bald head, which gave him rather a German look. He rode as no man of his size and weight has a right to ride; and he was generally known as the Baby. He was a merry companion, and champagne seemed to have no more effect upon him than water.

The Adjutant of the Thirtieth was perhaps the keenest soldier in the regiment. Succeeding to an earldom before he was out of long clothes, he had set aside the appeals of his mother and friends and insisted upon entering the army. He was now one of the smartest Adjutants the Thirtieth had ever had, conversant with every detail of his profession, and an enthusiastic cavalry man, convinced that British horsemen well led could do anything in the world, from

riding down unbroken infantry to boarding an ironclad. The men, who always love a lord when he is at all lovable, and often when he is not, idolised Lord Enleigh and would have followed him anywhere. His brother officers liked him too, but some of them were a little inclined to vote him a nuisance, and to sneer at his enthusiasm which was a rebuke to themselves. Some of the wilder spirits too resented the extreme courtesy and gentleness of his manner, which perhaps savoured a little of affectation.

Of the other Captains the two whom Guy Langley knew best were St. Orme and Beresford. The first, St. Orme, looked and spoke as if he had stepped from a novel of Dumas. He was a tall, rather loosely built man, who wore his fair moustache fiercely twisted upwards, and affected in all respects the manners and conversation of the typical hussar. Both men and women liked him, for his magnificent swagger was in no way offensive, and it was known to be accompanied by the reckless courage which belonged to the part. St. Orme did not profess to have deeply studied the science of war. That, he would tell you in a fine deep voice, rolling his r's, and speaking from the back of his throat, was all infernal nonsense. The British cavalry in old days had not learned to fight by reading books. Then he would swagger away, showing a great deal of cuff and collar, with his trousers ostentatiously turned up, as was then the fashion. Some people did not take St. Orme quite seriously, thinking that the

cuffs and the collar and the rest of the properties were the whole man. In this they were wrong, for he was a fine fellow. His 'get up' was merely a correct and necessary portion of the performance. George Beresford, generally known as 'Berry,' was an Irishman, or rather what the Irish of the present day would call one of the English garrison. His laughing eyes were very blue indeed, and his face was burnt by constant exposure to a deep brick-red. He had a strong though hardly an elegant seat on horseback, and gave promise of turning out a bold and capable soldier when his natural daring and dash should be regulated by experience. Berry had begun his career in an infantry regiment, but had eventually induced his father to let him exchange into the cavalry. He explained that he really could not 'march.' If a fellow had been intended to march he would have been given four legs. The argument was a little confused, but it served its purpose, and before long Berry was one of the cheeriest spirits in the Thirtieth Lancers.

' One of the subalterns, Denham, was Guy Langley's special aversion, and the most unpopular man in the regiment. How he came to get into the Thirtieth no one knew, and it was not easy to understand why he had entered the service at all. He was dark and slight, more like an Italian than an Englishman in appearance, and extremely reserved. No one ever heard Denham speak of his people, though, as a matter of fact, he had nothing to conceal. He held himself

apart, making no intimate friends, and giving no one the right to treat him with familiarity. In his way he was a good officer, cool and ready on parade, and thoroughly versed in the ordinary duties of his profession. So far as his work was concerned, he rarely laid himself open to criticism, or failed to do well whatever was required of him. He was a beautiful horseman, and one of the best steeplechase riders in the army. Yet Denham was essentially unpopular, both with officers and men. The former never felt that they knew him better than at first, and they resented his reserve and cynicism. The latter, though he never lost his temper with them, disliked him cordially. They felt that he despised them, as indeed he did. He regarded the British soldier as a drunken brute, and the feeling showed very plainly through his level manner. Denham had never owned a dog, and never touched one if he could help it. He said dogs were dirty, as they doubtless are. Curiously enough he was not unpopular with women. He seemed to interest them, and they admired his dark eyes and swarthy skin. Perhaps his apparent indifference to their beauty attracted them. He could dance well, when he chose, which he rarely did.

A strong contrast to Denham was little Hugh Dale, one of the junior subalterns and Guy's inseparable companion. They had been gazetted to the Thirtieth within a few months of each other. 'Chimp,' as they called him at Harrow for obvious reasons,

was short but strongly built, with a plain face which no one could help liking. It was a bright and thoroughly honest face, with good brown eyes and white teeth, and a keen merry expression. Physically Chimp was 'good all round.' Hard and quick, and practically in constant training, for he rarely drank and never smoked and was always on his legs, Chimp could probably have thrashed any man in the regiment. He could jump very nearly his own height; and could run in very fair time any distance from a hundred yards to a mile. He was an exceptionally pretty bat, without much reach, but with a good eye and great quickness and pluck. It was very hard indeed to bowl him, and if once he got set and began hitting, the other side had a bad time of it. In the field he was equally useful, a smart point, and not bad at the wicket, worth having anywhere. He could bowl too to a certain extent. In fact, there was nothing in the way of athletic exercises that came amiss to him. He could ride of course, not very scientifically perhaps, but very hard and straight. Chimp's two main characteristics were keenness and pluck. He was always ready to do anything, and he would go till he dropped. His weakest point was his language. It was the language of a boy, and altogether too simple for the expression of complex emotions. He disliked books, though he was by no means wanting in practical brains. Finally, he was a thorough little gentleman in his feelings and an almost

universal favourite. His two great objects of admiration and love were his father and Guy Langley. The former was an officer who had once commanded the Thirtieth, and was still well known to the regiment. He was a rich man, and almost alone in the world, so that his son was kept well supplied with money, which he spent royally to the old General's entire satisfaction.

The other subalterns of the Thirtieth were in their several ways a delightful set of boys, of the usual pattern. Who does not love the British subaltern? Is there, on the whole, anything in the world to equal him? As wild as a hawk, but so full of good feeling and honour, and so gloriously reckless of life and limb. Our officers are better than any other officers in the world if we only would believe it. They cannot help being so. There is no material in creation like the English boy.

As for the men, the Thirtieth had in 1876 a large number of old soldiers, and the discipline was admirable. Lancers always look well, for their uniform and their arm are greatly in their favour, but the Thirtieth looked better than most. The men were perhaps a little big for rough work; but they were steady and smart on parade; and altogether it was a beautiful regiment, and certain in Colonel Aylmer's hands to distinguish itself if sent on active service. Throughout all ranks there was a feeling of content, of respect for their commanding officer, and of pride in their corps.

There were not many ladies with the regiment when it sailed for India, but there were two or three of marked individuality.

Mrs. Aylmer, the Colonel's wife, was almost as much liked as her husband, and rather more feared. She was a few years younger than he was; small and slight, with steady gray eyes and a low forehead, from which the hair was brushed off in a thick smooth wave. Mrs. Aylmer was always perfectly dressed, and her manners were those of a gentlewoman born and bred. She feared no living thing, and was an uncompromising opponent, but a most warm and loyal friend. A truer woman never stepped; but she expected you to be quite honest with her. Anything approaching dishonesty or cowardice she met with a quiet but undisguised contempt which was extremely disconcerting. The Aylmers had one child, a daughter about six years of age, who would have been hopelessly spoilt if universal petting could have spoilt her. She was a pretty child, with her father's light brown hair and blue eyes, but she had inherited or caught from her mother a certain directness and self-possession of manner which in so small a person were odd and captivating. Mrs. Aylmer was the only person who kept her in order.

Mrs. Dangerfield was a strikingly handsome woman in a rather animal way, with large dark eyes, red lips, and a faultless figure, and a very merry wit. There had been something a little doubtful about her

past life, and though society had now agreed to overlook it, she was made to feel in numberless little ways that her antecedents were not altogether forgotten by her lady friends. The best of them were not intimate with her, and the others were occasionally unpleasant. Naturally enough she preferred the society of men, who were more charitable and less particular. With them she was a favourite, and not without reason; for she was bright and good-looking, and though perhaps a little *canaille* she had a good heart. Men always like that combination of qualities: the women who are 'pretty and witty, wild, and, yet too, gentle.' Mrs. Dangerfield rarely if ever spoke unkindly of others, even of those who had treated her badly. For an intentional slight or insult she would retaliate by some act of open warfare which generally left her with the balance in her favour. That done the matter was forgotten or at least forgiven, until some fresh provocation was offered. She was perfectly reckless of appearances, but capable of behaving properly when she thought it desirable to do so; and even at her worst you could hardly say that she was unladylike. Hers was a wild untamed nature, in which the animal qualities predominated over the intellectual; but she was not vulgar.

Mrs. Stewart, the wife of one of the senior Captains, was a woman of an altogether different stamp. She was handsome too, in a picturesque style, with voluminous plaits of copper-coloured hair, and a com-

plexion of unusual purity, which was rendered all the more striking by a very white and even row of teeth. Women said she painted, which was malicious, and men were a little afraid of her. She read a good deal, and was fond of talking about literature. Stupid men jeered, and said it was all humbug, that she only read up reviews. Some of the clever men thought her 'metallic.' She was an entertaining companion, with an acute sense of the ludicrous and a rather quick tongue, but by no means devoid of softer qualities. Between her and Mrs. Dangerfield there was an armed truce. They had met in open fight more than once, and were not close friends; but as opponents they respected one another. Mrs. Stewart had far more skill of fence; but, as a rule, Mrs. Dangerfield fairly rode her down. Now Mrs. Stewart avoided provoking Mrs. Dangerfield to conflict, and Mrs. Dangerfield never attacked any one who let her alone; so that they generally met and parted peacefully.

With the ladies as well as with his brother officers and his men Guy Langley was popular. It was no wonder altogether that he loved his regiment, and felt satisfied with life. '*Après tout*,' he used to say, with Voltaire, '*après tout, c'est un monde passable.*'

CHAPTER VI

OUTWARD BOUND

THE *Ganges* was a fine vessel, though not a fast one; and if the life on board was somewhat monotonous, it was not altogether disagreeable or uninteresting.

In 1876 England had not established herself in Egypt as she has since done; but even then an Englishman had good cause to be proud of our great highway to the East, guarded by its chain of fortresses. It warmed one's heart to come upon them, one after another: Gibraltar, Malta, Aden, with their towering batteries and crowded ships, and to see everywhere the familiar red coats, and flying out above them the brave old Union Jack.

A man does not know what England is until he leaves England. Then by degrees, if he has in him any power of thought and feeling, his eyes are opened, and it comes home to him as it never did before that he has a right to hold his head very high. The howls of party fight grow fainter and fainter, until they no longer vex the ear; the little angry politicians are seen no more; and in their place, from the mist and

the foam of the northern seas, there rises a majestic form with calm and fearless eyes : England, the mother of empires.

To Guy Langley the voyage was a revelation. He had started for India thinking very little of these things ; but his was a nature which could not remain insensible to the meaning of all he saw ; and long before he reached Indian waters it dawned upon him that he had hitherto been strangely ignorant and indifferent. A few chance words first aroused him from his carelessness.

Among the officers on board was a Major Russell of the Engineers, a man of striking presence, very tall and powerfully built, with dark grave eyes, and a reserved but courteous manner. He had distinguished himself both on service and at the Staff College, and, though only a few years older than Guy, had already gained a high reputation as a scientific soldier.

One fine calm morning, about a week after their start, the *Ganges* was gliding over a quiet sea, moved only by the rolling lines of the ground-swell. Guy was sitting on deck, half asleep in an easy-chair, with a novel in his lap, when Russell's hand was laid on his shoulder. 'Do you know where we are, Langley ?'

Guy looked up, rather surprised at the question. 'No, I don't, Major. Are we anywhere in particular ?'

Russell was standing by the ship's side, looking away to the northward. 'There is Trafalgar,' he said, as he pointed towards the blue line of the Spanish

coast. For a few seconds he was silent, then he went on: 'We must be close to where the fight was, a little south of it, and everything must have looked just as it does now. Do you remember? It was a calm day, about this time of year, or a little later, with a long smooth swell, and hardly a breath of wind. The French and Spaniards were lying out there to the right, more than thirty men-of-war, and we came slowly down upon them from the westward, with just breeze enough behind us to fill our topsails, and drove right through their line. What a fight it must have been! Sixty men-of-war pouring their broadsides into each other, and often so close that their yard-arms crossed. Isn't it hard to realise that all that was going on here, and only seventy years ago? The world seems to have changed so completely. Some of the sunken ships must be lying there still, perhaps under our very feet. What would one give to have seen such a day?'

Guy Langley stood gazing at the smooth blue sea, carried away by the strong feeling in Russell's voice and manner, and trying to picture the scene to himself. After a time he broke out. 'We may live to see it yet. We are bound to fight the French again some day, and we shall thrash them as we always have done. They never could stand up to us.'

Russell turned, and the pensive retrospective look died out of his face. 'That is a fine old theory, but I don't know that it is altogether a sound one, or a

safe one. They stood up to us well, even at Trafalgar, poor fellows. It was not simply superior courage that beat them.'

Guy looked incredulous. 'What was it, then?'

'Training chiefly, I think. We had been blockading their ports for years, and our ships' crews were thoroughly seasoned, while theirs were made up largely of landsmen. Of course we could manœuvre much more smartly than they could. And our gunners served their guns faster, and shot straighter, so that they suffered much more than we did.'

'I don't like to think our victories were all owing to that sort of thing,' Guy said.

'I don't say they were. I believe our men have more fighting devil in them, somehow. But it is as well to look at these things fairly, and not to run the chance of deceiving ourselves as the French did a few years ago. Besides, we have every reason to be proud of being better seamen and better gunners.'

Guy did not look satisfied. Russell laughed. 'You don't agree,' he said; 'you prefer the old way of putting it—'

"Two skinny Frenchmen, one Portuguese.

One jolly Englishman will lick 'em all three."

Well, of course pluck is the best foundation in the world, and I believe we have got it as no one else has. All I mean is, that it does not do to trust to pluck alone. You may win that way now and then, at a heavy cost, but three times out of four the men who

have been trained to play the game will beat you, as they would beat you at cricket or football.'

'Of course you are right, Major,' Guy answered ; 'but one likes to think our fellows are better in themselves.'

'I don't say they are not. I believe they are. All I mean is that we must not rely on that and neglect the rest. What happened to the French in 1870 is a terrible warning. I can't help feeling uncomfortable when I think how near we have been sometimes to ruinous disasters. We have had luck with us as well as pluck, and luck may change.'

Then he was silent again. He was thinking of the miserable rabble of French troops he had seen on the Swiss border when Bourbaki retreated before the Germans. 'No, we could never come down to that,' he said to himself.

Guy had gone back to Trafalgar. He was trying to remember what he had read about the fight, and to imagine the great battle-ships lifting slowly forward with the swell, their bows going up like the bows of the *Ganges*, as the long smooth waves rolled away in front of them towards the line of the enemy's broadsides. 'Didn't Nelson go in for cutting their line?' he asked. 'I do not quite see how that acted. It always seems odd to me that we beat the French on shore by fighting in line against their column, and beat them at sea by fighting in column against their line.'

The idea had never before clearly presented itself to Guy's mind, but conversation brings one's thoughts to a point, particularly if one is inclined to be an indolent thinker.

'That has struck me too,' Russell answered. 'I believe the reason was simply want of training. If the French ships and guns had been properly handled, they would have destroyed the heads of our columns at sea just as our well-trained infantry destroyed the heads of their columns on shore; but their fire was comparatively harmless, so we were able to get to close quarters without suffering much, and then to rake them horribly in going through, and to split up their line into separate fragments. That is what the French say themselves. I expect Nelson only attacked in that formation because he knew he could take liberties. All the more credit of course to his generalship. But if the French, instead of being merely brave men, had been trained to fight their ships properly, he could not have done it. We could not have attacked an American fleet like that.'

'An American fleet! Do you believe in the Yankees?'

'Don't you?'

'I don't know much about them, but I can't say I admire them. Those I have met seemed to me infernally vulgar and bumptious.'

'Some of them are vulgar of course. It's a country where one can rise rapidly. But I am always sorry to

hear Englishmen abuse Americans. They are our own flesh and blood, and it seems to me that we ought to be very proud of them; we soldiers particularly.'

'Why? Of course they are a big nation, because they have lots of room to grow in, but what have they ever done except grow, and swagger?'

'Fight. They have shown the world what war means with men of English race on both sides.'

'You mean in their civil war? I never read much about it: I was a small boy when it happened; but I always thought it was a case of two armed mobs.'

'No doubt they were not highly trained troops when they began; but look at the pluck and endurance they showed. I don't believe any other troops in the world except our own would have stood up against such awful losses. Look at Gettysburg, for instance, where there were fifty thousand men killed and wounded, a full quarter of the total numbers engaged, or the last campaign against Richmond, when Grant lost one hundred thousand men. I believe I am right in saying that altogether the North put a million and a half of men into the field; and that more than a quarter of a million, one man in six, were killed or died in hospital. The South probably lost quite as many out of a smaller total.'

'I never realised that there was anything like that.'

'But there was. And nine out of ten on both sides were men of our own blood. Isn't that something to be proud of?'

‘They hate us now. They would not thank you for calling them English.’

‘I know that. Of course they think they have improved on the old stock; and I am afraid they don’t love us. They were very sore with us during the war. It was not fair, I think, but it was natural enough. We were ignorant and careless; and the North thought we encouraged rebellion, and the South thought we did not sympathise with them in their fight for freedom. I hope the soreness will disappear in time; and whether it does or not, that makes no difference. Even if they hate us, I can’t help being proud of them. They belong to our race, and they are a grand nation.’

‘I suppose they are in some ways; I never thought of it in that light. But they always behave badly to us. They tried to stab us in the back when we were fighting Napoleon; and they always back up the Irish against us.’

‘Our own parties use the Irish against each other, and always did. You can’t expect the Americans to care more for us than we do for ourselves. Besides, they know they will have to deal with the Irish question themselves some day. It is only natural they should shelve it at our expense as long as they can.’

‘It may be natural, Major; it isn’t nice, in the way they do it.’

‘Well, I don’t mean to say the Yankees always

behave well to us. I don't think they do. But we must get to look beyond our own island. It can't hold us all; and anyhow those of us who have the good luck to remain in it ought not to regard as aliens those who live elsewhere, and to sneer at them for little differences of dialect, and manner, and habits. We ought to think of the English race as our own people wherever they may be, from Canada to the Cape. It will make us all the better Englishmen.'

As he ceased speaking Mrs. Stewart passed, looking for a chair, and Russell went off to help her. He did not return, but he had set Guy thinking, and during the course of the long voyage it happened more than once that the two found themselves together, leaning over the ship's side, and talking of various events which had gone towards the making of our Empire. Russell was a well read, thoughtful man, very proud of his country and jealous of her honour. His influence upon Guy was in all respects a good one. It did something to widen his sympathies, and remove from his mind the narrow prejudices of the stay-at-home Englishman. He began to understand that the men whose names were familiar to him were many of them mere political gladiators, who served to keep the mob amused while the real work of the race was being done. It came home to him that generation after generation, while statesmen had been wrangling and reviling one another, and carrying on their eternal struggle for place and power, millions of Englishmen

all over the world, regardless of party squabbles and party cries, had been steadily bearing forward the English flag. So it has been, and so it is still. They colonise America and Australia and New Zealand, and conquer India, and explore Africa, so that the English tongue is heard and the English flag is seen in every quarter of the globe. They are a heterogeneous force; peers and ploughmen, soldiers and sailors, merchants and magistrates, squatters and parsons, women and children; and they fight loosely, without much combination, and suffer heavy losses. Their graves are everywhere; the earth and the sea are full of their dead. Many of their countrymen who stay comfortably at home are too ready to believe evil of them, to lecture and condemn them on the smallest evidence, or on none at all, to impede them in their work, to support against them any man of another colour, even at times to look on with indifference while they are fighting for their lives; but the English flag goes forward nevertheless, and with it, into all the dark places of the earth, go freedom and order and justice.

Guy Langley began to understand it all before the *Ganges* had finished half her voyage, and his Colonel remarked that he was taking an interest in these things. 'I like that boy,' Aylmer said to his wife. 'He has more in him than most fellows of his age. He thinks, and he is a gentleman.'

Mrs. Aylmer put her work down on her lap, and sat looking out over the sea. It used to vex her

sometimes to see how quickly Guy's moods seemed to change: how, for example, he would turn in a moment from a quiet conversation with her or her husband, in which he had been talking 'so nicely,' to a rather noisy chaffing match with Mrs. Dangerfield. She wondered whether one could quite depend upon him.

Some doubt of the kind she now expressed. Aylmer rebuked her in his gentle way. 'I think that is rather hard, wife. He is very young, and has high spirits. You would not wish him to be always serious.'

'No, dear. I suppose I am uncharitable. He *is* a nice boy.'

Nevertheless the doubt recurred and remained, and Guy with his quick perception detected it, and felt hurt at it. He knew that he had many moods, but he would never admit to himself that this implied any lightness of feeling. He could honestly sympathise up to a certain point with totally different characters and lines of thought. That was all. Perhaps he was right. A quick sense of humour, and a tolerant spirit, which are commonly found together, may at times cause an honest man to be somewhat hardly judged by those whose minds are made of less flexible stuff.

One morning towards the end of October at daylight the *Ganges* cast anchor in Bombay harbour. The screw had hardly ceased to revolve when all on board were stirring; and soon the decks were covered with men.

Weary of their long confinement, all alike hailed with pleasure the sight of the Indian coast, and longed for the hour of landing. In the meantime, however, there was plenty to see. The wide bay full of shipping and small native craft; the fine buildings of the town; the low shore fringed with palms; the blue hills in the distance; the cloudless sky, in which the night mists were rapidly melting away under the influence of the rising sun and cool morning breeze; all combined to make up a very pleasant picture.

Guy Langley was one of the first on deck, and he stood for a time alone, leaning over the ship's side. To a man of his temperament there was something of poetry in the first sight of India, the land of adventure and romance of which he had read so much. A momentary feeling of annoyance came over him as the silence was broken by Dale's cheery voice.

'By Jingo! that's a stunning view,' the boy said as he walked up, looking as usual aggressively fresh and clean; 'we shall be off this beastly old tub before long now.'

Guy's dreams broke up, and he turned slowly round and looked at his friend. A smile came over his face, but he spoke rather reproachfully, and both smile and voice had in them an unintentional touch of contempt. 'Rum beggar you are, Chimp. That's "India's coral strand." I don't believe you ever think.'

Chimp was nettled and answered hotly. 'Yes, I do. I think just as much as any one else; only I am

not always talking rot about things.' Then he recovered his temper and laughed. 'Anyhow, we'll have a jolly good time on India's coral strand; won't we, old chap?'

Guy assented, and they were soon in conversation about the doings of the coming day.

What a hot day it was! Bombay is always hot, even in November—hot with a soft, damp, sticky heat which is very infuriating. Sit near a window undressed in the sea breeze, and it is bearable; but put on a shirt and collar, or pack a box, and life becomes a burden. To an Englishman fresh from Europe, the heat is not so trying as it is to the old Indian. For the former there is at all events something of novelty in the sensation. But even to new arrivals it is not pleasant. Go into a greenhouse heated up to 90°, you who have never seen the East, and imagine how you would like to live and work in it. That is Bombay in the 'cold weather'; happily it is not much worse in the hot.

The baggage was landed during the day, and the men in the afternoon. Then came the long railway journey, first through the magnificent gorges of the mountain range which fringes the coast, and afterwards through the tamer but still novel and beautiful scenery of the great central plateau of India. The Thirtieth, however, did not see much of it, for they travelled at night only, spending the day at the various rest-camps. They were heartily glad, one and all of them, when

one morning at the end of October, in a cool pleasant climate very different from the climate of the coast, the train drew up by the side of the long stone-flagged platform at Syntia, and they knew they were at last at their journey's end.

CHAPTER VII

SYNTIA

CAVALRY cannot be quartered on precipitous mountain-sides, and Syntia, like all cavalry stations, was therefore in the 'Plains'; but the plains of India afford a great variety of scenery and climate, from the arid deserts of stone and sand which lie along the north-west frontier to the moist, densely wooded flats of Bengal and the fine plateaux of Malwa and the Deccan. Syntia was situated in the midst of a rolling well-timbered district at a considerable height above the sea.

During the summer months the place was hot enough. From March to June the dry west wind blew steadily throughout the day. At this season the country looked very parched. The sky became a dull yellow; the trees were covered with dust; and the earth was brown and cracked, and almost bare of vegetation. Occasionally a welcome thunderstorm and shower, brought up by a sudden nor'-wester, came to cool the air for a few hours and wash the dust from the trees; but the next day it was as hot as before.

The regimental grass-cutters were sometimes hard pushed to find fodder for their horses. Yet somehow, morning after morning, as the sun grew hot, they might be seen returning to cantonments, their little gaunt ponies staggering under great loads of the creeping *doob* grass, laboriously collected with the aid of small curved sickles. It looked terribly uninviting, half roots and dust, but when it was carefully shaken and cleaned the horses liked it and throve on it. Then followed the monsoon. Towards the end of June the sky became overcast, and the clouds gathered and darkened and broke; and the parched earth was covered with pools of water; and on every side green grass and crops sprang up with magical rapidity; and the poor half-starved cattle, with their shiny ribs and pointed hip-bones, grew merry and strong. The rain lasted until September. Then the clouds began to lighten and disperse, and there followed a month of muggy rather disagreeable weather, while the sodden earth steamed and dried in the autumn sun. And then the wind set in from the northward, the vapours and heat fled away before it, and the sky became an exquisite cloudless blue. Then the air was cool and delicious, so that it was a pleasure to live; and the flowers were bright, and the trees looked fresh and beautiful as the breeze rustled through their leaves, and flocks of little green parrots wheeled about them at lightning speed, shimmering like winged jewels. Then in the morning the horses snuffed up the dry life-giving air, and began to

reach at their bits again, and to beg for a gallop; and as the turf flew away under the strokes of your big Australian, and the wind whistled past your ears, you felt that the world was good. Even in the hot weather it was always possible for the ladies and children and sick men to escape in a day or two from the sun and the dust to the pines and breezes of the 'Hills.' Syntia was within reach of the Himalayas.

For a man in sound health, who did not mind a little heat and could exist at a distance from Pall Mall, the place had its attractions. It was in the centre of one of the best sporting districts in India. During the cold season there were plenty of snipe and duck to be got among the reed-fringed meres and flooded rice-fields which lay in all directions glistening and slowly shrinking under the clear blue sky. Later, as the weather grew warm, the game little quail arrived in countless numbers, and an early riser could have many a good morning's shooting in the grain-fields and the low *jhow* jungle which covered the broad sandy bed of the neighbouring river. Twenty brace before breakfast for a single gun was no extraordinary feat. Before this, away to the north of the central station, the night sky had begun to glow with fires, and soon the long jungle grass was thinned, so that it was possible to work through it, and to get a shot at the game with which it swarmed: 'hog deer,' and leopards, and tiger, and buffalo. Farther north again were forests where one could stalk the graceful spotted deer; and to the west

hills where the big sambur stags were to be found, and plains which the antelope loved ; and almost anywhere in the district, if there was nothing else, one could shoot alligators. The great beasts lay floating on the water, with the top of their heads and the end of their snouts just out of it, or basking on the river-banks, printing a delicate pattern of scales on the wet sand. To riding men the country to the south was a paradise, for in parts the pig abounded, and the ground was fairly open, and with the help of a steady Arab or Waler, and a hog-spear, you could enjoy such sport as England knows not. Altogether, for a sportsman there were few better stations in the British empire, and so Guy Langley and Dale speedily concluded. The outgoing regiment had entertained them at dinner the first evening after they arrived ; and Dale, always keen for sport, had found out all about it from some kindred spirits.

The society of Syntia was not large. The 'Station' consisted of two clearly defined parts. At one end were the cantonments, in which were quartered the Thirtieth Lancers ; while at the other end, three miles distant, were the 'Civil Lines,' for besides being a military station Syntia was also the headquarters of a civil 'Division,' or small province.

It is not usual for a regiment of British cavalry to be quartered in an Indian station without other troops ; but for special reasons it does occasionally happen. At Syntia there were some fine old barracks and other buildings which it seemed a pity to leave unoccupied,

and an exceptionally good stretch of grass land. The last is, or was, an absolute necessity for a cavalry regiment in India, where horses were not fed on hay, but on fresh-cut grass. Twenty miles off, at Baner, was a large cantonment containing a force of all arms. Practically, the Thirtieth Lancers at Syntia belonged to this force, which they could join at a few hours' notice; and communication between the two places was frequent, both on business and pleasure. For balls, and races, and the like, the residents of one place always expected to be joined by the residents of the other. Nevertheless, an interval of even twenty miles is an appreciable obstacle; and for the pleasures of their daily life the officers of the regiment quartered at Syntia were mainly dependent upon themselves and the Civil Station. The only military residents not belonging to the Thirtieth were two young officers of a native infantry detachment, which supplied a guard for the Civil Treasury and other public buildings. This detachment was relieved every month.

The Civil Division of Syntia was a province about the size of Ireland, with a population of eight millions, and was divided for executive purposes into four 'districts,' corresponding to the four 'kingdoms' of Ulster, Munster, Leinster, and Connaught. In charge of the whole was an English officer called a 'Commissioner,' who was responsible for the maintenance of order, the collection of the Government revenue, and generally for the administration of the province. To help him in this

work, he had in charge of each district an English 'Deputy Commissioner,' who commanded the services of an English police officer, and two or three English assistants. There was an English judge at the headquarters of the division, who, with the help of the Deputy Commissioners and their subordinates, practically disposed of all judicial business, civil and criminal. Such is the simple framework of our empire in India. There are, of course, various departments—Public Works, Telegraph, Post-Office, and so on; but British India is, in fact, governed by a small number of English district officers wielding very extensive powers, and charged with every kind of work. Their difficulties are increased now by over-centralisation and other evil influences; but, cheered by the occasional smile of the British bayonet, they still manage to keep the country in order.

Besides being the headquarters of the Division, Syntia was also the headquarters of one of the districts of which the Division was composed. The Civil residents therefore comprised the district staff as well as the divisional staff. Even so, they were not numerous.

The most important person in Syntia was the Commissioner of the division, Colonel Treveryan.

Since the Mutiny he had risen steadily. He had found the service a disappointment in some ways; for, as India quieted down, and our methods of government grew more and more regular, the soldier adminis-

trators, who had been so useful and necessary in time of trouble, came to be regarded as somewhat out of place; and they were in many cases superseded by younger men belonging to the Civil Service, whose training was possibly more suitable to the altered condition of affairs. Looking for a career of personal rule enlivened by active service, Treveryan had found himself gradually reduced to a steady grind in court and office, with no chance of military work or distinction. He chafed against the peaceful monotony of the life, so different from what he had expected, and against the centralising tendency of the authorities. The power and influence of the district officers began to be lowered year by year; more and more regularity of form was demanded from them; and, in Colonel Treveryan's opinion, the country was worse ruled. Nevertheless, he did his work conscientiously, and on the whole with success. Though not elaborately trained in civil and judicial work, he had common sense, and he rarely made a mistake of more than form; while in all practical matters his knowledge of the people and their ways, and his popularity among them and ready acceptance of responsibility, made him a very valuable officer. He was sometimes sneered at by young gentlemen who had come out to India fresh from their examinations, and full of conceit in themselves and their acquirements; but he was worth more than most of them would ever be.

What you want in a country like India is courage

and judgment and common sense rather than technical skill. In England the uncertainty of the law is proverbial; and probably the main result of the elaboration of our Indian judicial machinery has been to make justice more doubtful than it was. But even supposing that justice had been made somewhat less doubtful, this is little in comparison with other things. By bad advice given to the ruler of a Native State, by ignorance of Indian ways and feelings, by slurring the practical management of a British district, a man may do infinitely more harm than by a series of sentences which can be reversed on appeal. An Indian district officer is one of a few hundred Englishmen who are ruling an empire of two hundred and fifty millions. He should be capable of hewing out a colossus if need be; but it matters comparatively little whether he can carve cherry stones. Yet you try to keep him carving cherry stones all his life; sitting in court or office, and submitting multitudinous returns, and letting the real work go. Then he suddenly finds himself facing great danger and responsibility, perhaps surrounded by armed revolt; and you expect him to stand out a heroic figure, like our great men of old to whose hands the sword was as familiar as the pen. The whole thing is wrong. India cannot be held by clerks and lawyers. And even supposing that English specialism were desirable in India the country cannot afford it. You would want ten times the number of men, and you cannot pay for them.

Next to Colonel Treveryan in the official scale was Mr. Oldham, the judge. He was a quiet, retiring man, of gentlemanly manners and good abilities, but weighed down by the burden of a very large family. He lived alone, his wife having been forced to leave him in order to look after the children in England. She, poor little woman, lived in Bedford, with a houseful of boys and girls whom she found it difficult to manage, while her husband toiled on in India to find the wherewithal for food and clothing. He could not afford to take his pension and retire, or to go on leave, and his life was a dreary one, like the lives of many Indian officials, with too much work and very few pleasures. Helen Treveryan liked the gentle, silent man, with his uncomplaining ways, and she did her best to make things brighter for him, but without much success. He was not a sportsman, and he had no prospect of further promotion in the service. He could not hope to see his wife or his children for years, if ever. It was a sad life, patiently borne for the sake of others.

The Deputy Commissioner of the Syntia district, Montague Hunter, was a man of very different character. Tall and stoutly built, with a cheery manner and hearty ways and imperturbable good temper, he was a general favourite. He had a constitutional dislike to mounting a horse, and was rather indolent in mind and body ; yet he was a useful officer, very clear-headed and decided in his opinions. The natives liked and respected him, and the district was in excellent order.

Mrs. Hunter was a pretty woman, inclined to be stout, but bright and active. She danced well, and enjoyed her dinner, and was given to snubbing her husband, whom she regarded as very inferior to herself in ability. The Hunters had no children, and were well off. People often wondered why they stayed in India; but the fact was, that he liked the easy life and was too lazy to uproot himself, and she liked it too, though she had the snobbish habit of perpetually sneering at all things Indian.

Then there was the Civil Surgeon, who also had charge of the jail. Doctors in India seem to be mostly Irish, and George Beamish was no exception to the rule. He was rather rough in appearance and manner, but not a bad fellow, or a worse doctor than others. His wife was Irish too, with good eyes and a bad mouth, and a dreadful brogue. She was the mother of a considerable family, but most of the children were in England. There was only one with them, a troublesome young ruffian of seven, whom she could not make up her mind to part with. Mrs. Beamish was a good-hearted woman, but a bad manager, and not a lady by birth or education.

Major MacLean, the Superintendent of Police, was, like Colonel Treveryan, a military officer, who had taken to civil work after the Mutiny. Bodies of military police were then being organised, and MacLean, a Scotchman with a taste for fighting, thought he saw his chance, and left his regiment

for the command of a police corps. Very soon, as the country grew quiet, the military character of the corps disappeared, and MacLean found himself, to his great disappointment, condemned to a career for which he had no inclination whatever. It was too late then to return to the army, as the military authorities would not take back officers who had elected for police work. Nevertheless, though disappointed, MacLean did his duty efficiently. He was a good shot and sportsman, and in his way a handsome man, with a dark, resolute face and grizzled hair. His greatest pleasure seemed to be whist, which he played unusually well.

The clergyman of the parish, or 'Chaplain of Syntia,' was one of the cheeriest men in the station, always ready to join in any fun that was going, and to do his best for the happiness of others. With the help of Helen Treveryan and Hunter, who had a good voice, and some taste for music, the Pádre had succeeded in raising a very respectable little choir; and his services were bright and well managed. His religious views were so broad and tolerant that they shocked some of his congregation, but no one could doubt his earnestness and sincerity.

The European society of Syntia included also two junior officers of the Civil Service, who were known respectively as the Joint Magistrate and Assistant Magistrate.

The former, James Anderson, was a Scotchman

of a not very pleasant type. He had his good points, among them a considerable power of work and some courage; but he was not a gentleman in his manners or appearance. He thought a great deal of his position as a member of the Covenanted Civil Service; and was proud of having passed the severe competitive examination by which the service is recruited. He looked upon military men with a mixture of jealousy and contempt. He dressed badly, and did not shoot or ride or play any English game; and he would accept an invitation with a slow, 'Well, I think I will,' which did not strike one as particularly courteous. He lived on much less than his pay, and without apparently meaning it, was habitually rude to his wife, a harmless, rather pretty little woman, who was too good for him. Anderson was absorbed in his work, and was always talking 'shop,' a particularly uninteresting kind of shop, full of strange abbreviations and Indian technical terms. He knew the 'Civil List' by heart, and was great on the subject of appointments and promotions. Natives of India disliked him, and said he was 'not a Sahib.'

The second of the young civil servants, Arthur Goldney, was a boy just out from England. His father, an officer of the Indian army, had died some years before, leaving a widow and several children, among whom he was the only boy. Mrs. Goldney was a brave little woman, and though left with a

very small income, she had managed to educate her family and to bring them up in decent surroundings. The boy was of course a household hero from his childhood, but he was too modest to be spoilt; and, moreover, his mother, with all her affection, was sensible, and treated him properly. He did well as a 'day boy' at Tonbridge, and to his own great surprise passed for the Indian Civil Service direct from the sixth at the age of eighteen. Goldney was small and rather delicate-looking, with a very fair skin and light brown curly hair. He was shy and nervous in his manner, and had a girlish trick of blushing which caused him untold misery. Some one had christened him the 'Pink 'un,' and the name had stuck. The Pink 'un did his work well, and was cruelly robbed by his servants. Anderson said he was 'soft,' and greatly despised him.

Then there was the officer in charge of the Public Works Department, Captain Lee of the Engineers. He was a good-looking man and a very hard rider. He had married, a year or two before, a young Irish girl, with pretty eyes, and a bright, warm manner which was very taking.

Practically this completed the small circle of Syntia 'society.' There were one or two planters in the district who were occasionally seen at headquarters; and very good fellows they were in their way—hard riders and pleasant companions; but, except for a few days in the year, they lived away in the country

in their thatched bungalows, where they were always ready to welcome a visitor with the most profuse hospitality. There were also a few men of mixed blood, who held minor posts under Government or pleaded in the Courts. They and their families were seen at church, and some of them at the Commissioner's ball on the Queen's birthday, but they did not associate with the English residents.

And then . . . then there were the eight millions of 'natives,' who stood almost wholly apart from the little knot of white men. There were many gentlemen of good standing in the division—nobles and landowners and officials. These paid more or less formal visits to the European district officers, and some received a formal return visit. Occasionally one of them gave a dance or other entertainment to the European community. If it was a dinner, the host came in when the eating was over, and sat in a chair at some distance from the table while his health was proposed and drunk. In return, the Europeans generally asked the chief native residents to garden-parties, and sometimes to balls, where they looked very uncomfortable and out of place. But, except in the case of one or two Mahometans, who would accept an invitation to dinner, and one or two Hindus, who played Badminton and lawn-tennis, there was little social intercourse between the races. Imperfect acquaintance with each other's language was in itself a serious bar to such inter-

course, and there were other obstacles. Natives and Europeans alike were more or less uncomfortable and bored in each other's company.

It was not altogether a satisfactory state of things. There were faults on both sides. The fault on the English side was a tendency to show too little politeness and consideration; to take advantage of the want of independence which characterises the oriental. In a man like Treveryan this fault did not exist. In a man like Anderson it was marked. On the other hand, it was very difficult to become socially intimate with people of totally different habits and views, who thought it a disgrace for a woman to be seen, and a pollution to touch your food.

Nevertheless, there was much good feeling and mutual respect between the two races. A certain amount of stiffness in social intercourse does not prevent this. Some native gentlemen were greatly liked by the Europeans, and in their turn they trusted their English friends, and came to them freely for help in all their difficulties and troubles. The district officers were their natural advisers and protectors against all kinds of injury, and the duty was honestly and kindly performed. It was a curious state of affairs altogether to English ideas, but the Indian Empire is in all ways a marvellous structure.

CHAPTER VIII

SOME MORNING CALLS

THE Thirtieth Lancers had been a few days in their new quarters, and were beginning to settle down, when Guy Langley and Dale made their first attempt to become acquainted with their fellow-countrymen in Syntia.

There are two customs in India which strike a newly-arrived Englishman as curious. In the first place, newcomers are expected to call on the older residents, who, unless for extraordinary reasons, always return the call, and then take or avoid steps towards a better acquaintance. In a small and peculiar society like the English society of India, where, except at one or two commercial ports, almost every one is a servant of the State, the call and return call are in the nature of official formalities. After this preliminary people sort themselves; but every one holding a certain rank knows every one else as a matter of course. Secondly, for no imaginable reason, the visiting hours are in the extreme heat of the day, from twelve to two. Except among people who know one another very well indeed

an afternoon call is a discourteous exhibition of 'side.'

One night after dinner, having mastered these facts, and obtained some information about the inhabitants and the geography of the Station, the two young men made up their minds to set forth on a round of visits.

Next morning, shortly before twelve o'clock, Guy Langley sauntered out on to the steps of the little house which he shared with Dale. He had arrayed his handsome person in a light morning suit which showed some creases from long confinement in a box, but was as good a fit as most of Poole's masterpieces; and, on the whole, he was satisfied with the result.

The sky was cloudless, and a faint northerly breeze stirred the blossoms of the purple creeper which covered the pillars of the porch. Under its flat roof, in front of the steps, was standing the dog-cart in which they proposed to make their expedition. Dale had bought it from one of the officers of the outgoing regiment, and was now standing on the steps looking over his purchase with evident complacency. It was a very light cart, with varnished woodwork, rather high, but not too high for the little mare which stood in the shafts, very neatly turned out in brown harness with bright brass mountings.

The mare was a picture. She belonged to a class which was to be found in India in those days, the 'stud-bred.' Horses raised in the Government breeding establishments, if they proved unsuitable for

cavalry or artillery work, were sold to the public, and very good horses they were. 'Bess' was a good specimen of the class. She stood barely fifteen hands, and was certainly light; but there was no other fault to be found with her. In colour she was a bright bay. The beautiful head, with tapering muzzle and large full eye; the satin skin through which the network of veins stood out; the small foot, as hard as iron; all showed Arab blood, but Arab blood crossed and improved by the blood of the English thoroughbred. There was more reach and length than one can find in the Arab, possibly less compactness for those whose eyes are trained to the Arab shape, but a look of greater stride and speed. She had a good shoulder, with the higher withers and longer slope of the English horse, and was almost too high in the quarters, which from behind showed squarer than one would have expected, though they were a little light and ragged. That was perhaps partly owing to the fact that the mare carried no flesh. At the moment Bess was behaving in a manner characteristic of her sex. Her ears were laid back, and her teeth showing, and every two or three seconds the pretty fidgety head made a quick snap at the man who stood in front of her. Her near hind leg was up, and the glittering shoe struck sharply at times upon the iron edge of the step next the house door. It was all feminine nonsense, as Dale well knew. Though she answered his voice by a turn of the head and a series of vicious-looking

snaps over her shoulder, she had never bitten any one in her life ; and she would not have dreamt of kicking at the step when any one's foot was on it. She was impatient of restraint, and would be troublesome at times if kept standing ; and the cut of a whip made her furious ; but she was a high-bred lady, and incapable of any vulgar tricks.

Pooran, the native groom, or *syce*, who had charge of her, was a good fellow and very proud of the mare. He had followed her when she was sold, and Dale was glad to get him. Dark and slight, with a smooth face and white teeth and a waist like a girl's, Pooran looked and felt very smart in his tight-fitting livery of dark blue cloth faced with a lighter shade of the same colour. He wore a silver crest in the front of his turban of intertwisted blues ; and his brown legs emerged, free to run, from light drawers of pinkish cotton. Those thin bare legs, without a sign of calf, could carry him over the ground in a very surprising way. Englishmen in India do not adhere to the native custom of making *syces* trot behind their carriages ; but even now these men seem to have a wonderful hereditary power of running. Pooran, if required, could go for an hour at a time, and finish fresh and cool, having hardly turned a hair. He had one slight failing : like many of his caste he was too fond of drink ; but he was a good boy, and turned out his mare most creditably, her skin shining with a metallic lustre, and her bit as bright as the burnish

would make it. To him the mare's corn was a sacred thing, not to be stolen even for his own dinner, and woe came upon the grass-cutter who dared to bring her bad grass.

'At last,' Dale said as Guy came out; 'I have been waiting a good half-hour, and the mare has kicked the trap nearly to bits. Now I would not mind betting you have forgotten your cards.'

'Get in, Chimp, and don't be childish. She wants to be off.' Dale walked round to the off wheel, and the two of them got up smartly, together, the mare making a dash to the front directly they were alongside. The boy Pooran held on to her head for a second until they were fairly up; then he let go, and she went off with a bound, while he scrambled up behind. The cart fairly flew down the short drive and out into the road, the mare lurching up into her collar in a way that must have tried the brown harness. Then gradually Dale's strong little hands pulled her into a regular though rather vehement trot, and they went bowling down the smooth road towards the Civil Station. In India, before local self-government was imposed upon a wondering people, the district officers knew how to keep up good roads. With a centre of tough *kunker* conglomerate, and grassy side-pieces fringed by lines of trees, these roads were equally pleasant for riding and driving. The mare of her own accord kept to the centre, and the cart travelled fast. In less than a quarter

of an hour they were at the entrance of the Civil Lines.

The first house on the road was Oldham's. It was a low, flat-roofed house, standing in a square grass compound which was enclosed by a mud wall about four feet high. One of the whitewashed pillars of the gateway bore the name W. Oldham, C.S., painted on a small board. The house was whitewashed also, and though the grass looked dry and dusty, the general effect of the white house, lying under the bright blue sky, with a few mango trees about it, was not unpleasing.

The Judge Sahib was out of course, gone to his Court, and they left cards for him.

Then they drove through another gateway in another mud wall, to another flat-roofed house, and asked for Mrs. Anderson. Mrs. Anderson was in, and received them in a stiff, barely furnished drawing-room with a round table in the middle. The walls were painted light green and picked out at the corners with a pattern in darker colour. Mrs. Anderson was shy and had not much to say, and the visit soon ended. Her husband was out, she said — gone to *cutchery*, and would be so sorry to have missed them, which was more polite than true.

When they came out the mare was wrenching to get her head free, and she went off with a jump again. She had only a few hundred yards to go before she came to the house where the Hunters lived, and she

was pulled up in front of their door very unwillingly. The house was smarter-looking than those already visited. There were some shrubs and flower-beds in front, and the gateway and drive were neatly kept. Mrs. Hunter was at home, and Dale said 'Blow it!' in a very audible voice. She was pleasant enough, however, and he rather liked her.

Then the mare began to give trouble. When they came out they found her pawing the ground and backing, while Pooran hung on to her head and made libellous remarks about her female relatives. She stood still when Dale called to her, and the boys got up and told Pooran to let go, but the mare did not move forward. She shook her head and bored downwards at her bit, and planted her forefeet firmly. Thereupon Dale was foolish enough to touch her sharply with the whip. She jumped forward with a loud snort, and then began to back—rapidly this time, and in such a way as to twist the cart round against the steps. When she had the wheels pasted against them she snorted again, defiantly, and pawed the ground. Dale began to lose his temper and swear. Guy was laughing gently. 'Don't be an ass, Chimp,' he said, 'and don't hit her. She's not that sort.' Next moment he was down and at her head. She snapped at him, or rather towards him, but he took her by the rein close up, and petted her until she grew quieter. In a minute or two she let him lead her forward, throwing up her head at first, but soon giving

way, though reluctantly. Then Guy got back into his seat, and the mare was coaxed into a slow and precarious trot. Finally she settled down again, and when they drove through another gap in another mud wall, and pulled up at the door of another flat white bungalow, the 'Vicarage,' she seemed to have recovered her temper.

The Pádre Sahib was in, and received them warmly, with offers of a brandy and soda, and conversation about pig-sticking. He came out and admired the mare when they left, showing a considerable knowledge of her good points. He measured her carefully under the knee with his pocket-handkerchief, in spite of her snapping, and rejoiced at the result; and then stood bald-headed in the sun, smiling at them as they drove away. 'Nice boys,' he said, as he went back to his room to write his sermon, and Dale was delighted with him. 'Jolly old chap,' was his verdict. 'Pity all parsons are not like that. We'll get him over to dinner and give him a skinful of fizz.'

Then they left cards for MacLean and the Pink 'un, who had already called at the mess, and went on to the Lees. Mrs. Lee was not receiving visitors that day. *Darwáza bund*, the man said, the door is shut. After that they made for the Civil Surgeon's. They proposed going last of all to Colonel Treveryan's and staying there to lunch if they were asked.

The way to the Doctor Sahib's house was a very bad one. The house lay off the metalled road, and

was approached by a narrow lane in which the dust lay six inches deep, between low mud walls topped with a kind of cactus or prickly pear. Here and there a tall palm or a group of feathery bamboos overshadowed the wall. The boys drove down this lane until they came to a house smaller and barer and dustier-looking than any of the others. There was not a vestige of flower-garden ; nothing but dust and dry grass. The front of the little square house had a narrow piece of verandah in the middle, but no portico. The plaster was hanging from the pillars of the verandah, and peeling from the two steps which led up to it. At one end of the verandah, on the broken plaster floor, was a tin plate, with some dog-biscuit sticking to the bottom. At the other end was a little strip of drugget, upon which lay some unfinished needlework. In the middle was a door, covered by a *chik* or hanging transparent mat, the straws of which were broken and protruding. Above the door, nailed to the whitewashed wall by a strip of skin, and hanging rather crooked, was a very badly cured antelope's head, the rough bone showing at the root of the spiral horns, the ears broken, and the face gone bare in patches, with some dirty cotton wool in the nostrils.

There was no servant to be seen about this dreadful abode, and after calling out once or twice Dale proposed to give it up. 'What a beastly hole,' he said. 'They live in rum places out here, but this licks everything. Let's leave cards on the verandah and

go.' Guy agreed doubtfully, and they were about to do so when they were stopped by the appearance of a small boy who came round the corner of the house.

The boy was worthy of his dwelling-place. He had a dirty white face and sandy hair, half-hidden by a broken pith hat. His clothing consisted of a blue jersey, blue serge breeches, too short for him and badly frayed at the knees, and a pair of lace boots without laces, above which one could just see the tops of some loose wrinkled stockings. The thin white legs were covered with cuts and bruises. This was young George Beamish, generally known as the Limb. He stopped in front of the mare and called out with an accent in which the Irish brogue of his parents struggled through the nasal twang of the country-bred child: 'The bearer's gone to his dinner, and mother says you're to come in. She'll be coming directly.'

Guy and Dale looked at one another and got down, and walked through the doorway, lifting the broken *chik*. As they came into the room another door opposite, from which the wind was blowing out a thin red curtain, was hastily closed by some one in stockinged feet. It was Mrs. Beamish, who generally spent her mornings in a back verandah, clothed in her dressing-gown, with her fine hair rolled into a loose knot, discussing household questions with her native servants. She was now dressing rapidly to receive her visitors.

They sat down in the little untidy room, finding it rather pleasant to be out of the sun, and the boy pushed aside the *chik* and stood looking at them. Guy saw him and called him in. He came with his hat on, holding in his hand a rough wicker bird-cage, the pointed top downwards. There was something black inside, and Dale asked him what it was. He held it up, showing a dead bat, curled into a shapeless lump, and unpleasant to the senses. 'Poof, how it stinks,' Dale said. 'What do you bring the disgusting thing in here for?' The boy laughed and went out of the room, as his mother came in, full of apologies for keeping them waiting.

She was a good-tempered woman, with rather coarse features not very clearly cut, and she spoke volubly with a magnificent brogue. From the first she and Dale were on familiar terms, and in a few minutes he was imitating her to her face. The imitation was bad of course; an Englishman, not bred in Ireland, can never talk Irish; but it was impudent and obvious. 'Ah! now you're laughing at me,' she said. 'What a shame;' but they parted the best of friends—the lady seeing her guests to the door. She called the mare a 'beautiful harse,' and begged them to come again whenever they could spare the time, and Dale promised freely.

As they were about to drive away they heard a sharp twitter of alarm, and saw one of the little gray squirrels which swarm about Indian 'compounds'

throw up its tail and race along the ground towards a tree, pursued by the Limb and a fox-terrier puppy. The squirrel got safely up the trunk and lay on a branch looking downwards, twittering at intervals and flirting its tail up perpendicularly. Then the Limb proceeded to have some sport. He had exchanged his dead bat for a *galél* or pellet-bow, and he now fitted a clay pellet on to the double string with an ease which showed constant practice. His first shot was excellent. The pellet shattered itself on the branch just under the squirrel's feet, and sent the little creature scurrying up the tree in terror. After that it was more wary, and kept under cover, dodging rapidly from branch to branch. The Limb soon grew tired of looking for it, and Dale, who had been watching the sport with keen interest, let the mare have her head. She was getting impatient again.

As they drove towards the gate, he called out to the boy with a laugh, 'What a little duffer you are. You can't shoot a bit.' It was a rash speech under the circumstances, and it was fearfully punished. The Limb saw his chance and jumped at it. 'I will shoot you,' he called out with his nasal twang, and turned his bow upon them. Then he changed his mind and ran towards the mud wall along which they had to pass on turning out of the gate. 'Look out, Chimp, the little devil means it,' Guy said, and they sent the mare out of the gate and down the lane at a smart trot. They were just too late. The Limb knew his

ground and had them 'on toast.' They were ten yards from the gate when his bare sandy head and eager eyes topped the wall just ahead of them. The mare shied wildly across the road, frightened by the sudden apparition, and almost as she did so the bow twanged and the hard clay pellet struck her fair on the quarter with a crack like a pistol-shot.

How they got through the next minute or two without a smash they never quite knew. As the blow came the mare plunged forward with a mad snort of pain and rage, then landed both heels hard against the splash-board and went off at a furious gallop. As they bumped along the dusty lane, they heard behind them the Limb's yell of triumph, and a second pellet flew over their heads. In a few seconds they were out of range, but by no means out of danger, for the lane was only a quarter of a mile long, and it met the road at right angles. It seemed impossible that they could turn the corner without an upset at the pace they were going, and Dale seemed quite unable to moderate it. The mare's ears were laid back touching her neck, and she was galloping as if the light cart which bounded behind her was no impediment whatever. Nothing saved them but the mare's own good sense. You could always depend upon her in a difficulty. As they neared the end of the lane her ears went up, and there was a falter in her stride. Before them, twenty yards off, was the yellow strip of metalled road, and beyond it the opposite bank. If the bank

had been bare, she would probably have gone at it, for there was little time to think, and she could jump like a deer; but luckily it was at this point closely fringed with bamboos, and in all her excitement she was not going to jump into a bamboo thicket. As she came to the road she broke and tried to stop, and went round the corner to the right. It was a very close thing, and for a second Guy gasped as he hung on to his seat. The off side lifted, and the cart came spinning round on the near wheel, which whirled upon the hard *kunker*. But it did get round, and a moment later Pooran was at the mare's head, and she was standing by the road-side, trembling all over and bathed with sweat, her crimson nostrils dilating rapidly and her eyes very wild, but in hand.

Till then Dale had been taken up with their own danger, but now that it was over his thoughts recurred to the cause of it, and the language that he used was dreadful. Very little encouragement from Guy would have sent him back to catch the child and give him condign punishment. Fortunately Guy could sympathise with the other side of the question. 'Bosh, Chimp,' he said with a laugh. 'The little beggar scored all round. You began it, you know. He's a horrid little beast; but it was very funny.'

'Devilish funny, I daresay; but you wouldn't have laughed if you had found the cart on the top of you at the corner. Little brute! I'd like to break his neck.' Dale's wrath was not decreased by seeing

a broad smile on the face of Pooran. However, to do him justice, he was not vindictive, and though he growled a little more it was not long before he was pacified. Then they got the mare quiet and resumed their road. They still had to call on Colonel Treveryan, and if possible to get some lunch.

The Treveryans' house was a contrast to the one from which they had just been hunted. It stood high, facing to the north, in the centre of a piece of grass land covering perhaps a square mile. Good roads surrounded this land on all sides, and from them well-kept drives, running through avenues of tall trees, led to the hall door. As Guy and Dale drove through the main gateway from the eastward, they passed on their right a fine grove of mango trees, behind which were the stables and connected buildings, while on their left was an open sward. A little farther on, where the mango grove ended, they came upon a covered swimming-bath, a flock of pigeons wheeling in the blue sky above it. On the other side the grass had given place to a garden, separated from the road by a thick hedge and some flowering shrubs, and then they came to the house steps. In front of the house, to the north, the ground sloped down towards the river, which was perhaps a mile away. Looking in that direction one could see the yellow sands, from which the floods of the rainy season had receded, and beyond them a stretch of well-timbered undulating country fading into the blue distance. Over the

river and up the grassy slope came the cool dry northerly breeze, just stirring the pendent white blossoms of the lofty cork trees in the avenue and sighing through the feathery branches of the casuarinas about the house, with a sound like the sound of a distant sea.

As the dog-cart pulled up, a native servant, well dressed and beautifully clean, his forehead bearing the caste marks in sandalwood powder, came down the steps with a low *salaam*, and received upon a silver waiter the cards which the two young men sent in. At the same time he asked them to follow him. They alighted and walked up the steps into an anteroom lined with book-shelves. In the centre of this room was a low square ottoman heaped with cushions, while overhead some canaries were singing their little hearts out as the breeze faintly rocked their hanging cages.

Dale said they were making a beastly row, and Guy reproved him, as the servant led them on to the drawing-room. This was a large and lofty room, in the centre of the house, and was lighted from the ceiling. Upon the painted walls, of a delicate shade of pink, were hung a few good pictures. A piano stood near the corner to the right, and some chairs and couches and small tables were scattered about the room. Underfoot, instead of a carpet, was cool smooth matting, with some leopard-skin rugs. A number of doors opened into the dining-room beyond, and into other rooms at the sides. These doors were all open,

to let the air play through, but curtains of bright striped colours were hung across them, and separated one room from another. Opposite the main entrance, between the two curtained doors leading to the dining-room, was a large mirror, in which, as he walked in and found the room empty, Guy Langley was able to contemplate the lie of his hair and the fit of his clothes.

The whole bore traces of a woman's presence, and her taste was specially evident in the arrangement of the flowers with which every corner was filled. They were there in masses, great clusters of Gloire de Dijon roses, yellow and purple pansies, and fragrant violets, the flowers of the old country mixed with the blossoms of Indian flowering trees. Guy was quick to notice these things, and all he saw of Helen Treveryan's abode during the minute that he was waiting for her arrival seemed consistent with what he had heard of her. He was therefore prepared to see some one different from Mrs. Beamish or Mrs. Anderson. But when the curtain of a door near the piano was drawn aside and she walked forward to receive her visitors, both of them were fairly taken aback, and Guy's handsome eyes opened with an expression of pleased admiration which an older woman would not have failed to recognise.

The girl made, in truth, a very pretty picture. Tall and erect, with a well-shaped head and graceful movements, Helen Treveryan would have attracted notice anywhere. Though slight in figure she did not look

delicate. There was health and strength in every line and gesture. The broad chest, not yet fully developed; the pale but clear skin through which the blood showed so brightly when she blushed; the firm step and upright carriage; all told of a good constitution and a country childhood. Her hair was of a bright beautiful brown—English brown—neither dark nor red, nor flaxen; neither Celtic nor German. It grew rather low on a broad straight forehead, and was very thick at the temples. Her eyes were dark and rather deepset; they looked at you quite fearlessly, but they were gentle eyes, without hardness or criticism. You felt at once that you could trust Helen Treveryan, and you felt it more when she spoke. That steady low voice was a thing that could not deceive. She had small ears, very prettily shaped, small wrists and small firm hands, white and womanly, and yet capable of giving you an honest welcome. She wore a gray dress, trimmed with a little dark gray velvet. In the breast of it she had fastened a bunch of violets. By her side stood the deer-hound ‘Rex,’ her inseparable companion.

She came forward with a faint flush on her cheek, and stood for a moment looking from one of the young men to the other, with something like an inquiry in her eyes. Guy guessed her doubts, and smiled as he shook hands with her. ‘It is puzzling to have two of us strangers coming together,’ he said; ‘my name is Langley.’ She smiled slightly too, and said, ‘Thank you. That is a real kindness. Every one is not so

thoughtful.' Then they fell into conversation, helped out by Rex. He approved of both the young men, and especially of Guy, to whom he returned, pushing up Guy's hand with his head, to be petted.

They talked on for a few minutes, and Guy was charmed. From the first Helen Treveryan's sweet face and frank unaffected manner won him completely. She was composed and dignified in all she said and did, but now and then he saw her eyes brighten with fun, and he knew she understood him. Before they had been a quarter of an hour in the room together they were good friends, and it pleased him greatly to feel it. Dale liked her too, but he felt a little shy with her. She was in a sense too old for him.

Guy was beginning to think with regret that they must bring their visit to an end, when Helen said, 'Here is my father;' and Colonel Treveryan walked into the room.

He was a tall spare man, with a good figure and handsome face, neatly dressed and booted. His wavy brown hair, of the same colour as his daughter's, was thick and almost untouched by gray. His eyes were hers over again, but his fair skin was bronzed by the sun, and his mouth was covered by a heavy moustache. At a short distance, in the saddle particularly, or in flannels on the tennis-court, he seemed a young man still. It was not until you looked closely into his face, and saw the lines about his eyes and mouth, that you could believe he had seen his fiftieth year.

Colonel Treveryan shook hands with the two young men as his daughter introduced them, and then said, 'I hope you are going to stay to lunch. It is just two o'clock.' Guy assented willingly, with a look at Dale, and a few minutes later lunch was announced.

The morning's drive in the sun and their mad gallop had made them thirsty, and a long tumbler of iced whisky and soda seemed to them very delicious. Guy noticed with illogical satisfaction that Helen drank nothing but water; and her father, like many men of Indian experience, was equally abstemious. As they ate their lunch, Helen told her father about the flight from the Doctor's. 'What a little scamp that boy is,' Colonel Treveryan said. 'It is very lucky he did not break your necks. Beamish ought to keep him in order. He wants a good whipping occasionally.'

Helen demurred at once. 'Poor little fellow! I won't have him abused. We are great friends. He is not really a bad boy, father; only he is so much alone and he gets into mischief. He is never troublesome when he comes here.'

Colonel Treveryan looked at her and smiled. 'I believe you would stand up for the Old Gentleman himself if you heard anything said against him.'

'No, I shouldn't, daddy; and you must not be wicked. But I am sure Georgie did not mean any harm, and you know it was really Mr. Dale's fault, wasn't it?' she said, turning towards him.

Dale objected indignantly; and Guy took Helen's

side, and they had a merry discussion, which ended in an agreement that the Limb had got the best of it all along the line.

By the time lunch was over, Guy was thoroughly at home with the Treveryans; and when Colonel Treveryan remarked that it was Saturday afternoon, and that he meant to take a half-holiday, Guy agreed without difficulty to stop and have a cigar, and Dale, though he did not smoke, made no objection.

They walked out to the broad south verandah, which at that time of the year was only pleasantly warm, though the sun had been on it all day. It was screened by one or two *babul* trees, with light green foliage and round fluffy yellow blossoms, which grew close by the wall of the house. Beyond them was a level stretch of grass almost big enough for a cavalry parade-ground, and beyond that a hedge and road, backed by a dark line of mango trees, with some slender palms standing out against the horizon above them. Just inside the road, on the grass, was a giant banyan, with hanging boughs which had touched and taken root, forming a grove thirty or forty yards in diameter. Nearer, to the right, a single cork tree, with hanging white blossoms, reared its straight tall form into the cloudless sky.

The three men sat in easy cane chairs, looking out through the light branches of the *babul* trees and chatting, while the breeze came through the house behind them. Helen Treveryan had left them, to write letters, she said, much to Guy's disappointment; but her father

was a pleasant companion. His cigars did not appeal to Dale, who was a little restless, but Guy, with his indolent nature and his enjoyment of all things beautiful, was perfectly happy. He was surprised when he heard a clock in the drawing-room chime four. 'Is it really four o'clock?' he said, looking at his watch. 'I had no idea it was so late. We must be going. May I ask for our trap?'

But Colonel Treveryan objected again. 'Don't go,' he answered, 'unless you've something to do. It will be warm driving over just now. Come round and have a look at my horses, and then, I daresay, my daughter will give us a cup of tea.'

They strolled out by the front of the house to the swimming-bath. The green venetians all round it were closed, and the water looked very cool and inviting. Then they went on through the mango grove to the stables, scaring on their road a gaunt yellow pariah dog, who was stalking a pigeon on the ground. He trotted off a few yards, and stood looking at them, satisfying his conscience by a low, lazy, yelping bark which had no heart in it.

Colonel Treveryan's stables were very different from what Guy and Dale were accustomed to see in England, but they were well suited to the climate. They were airy buildings of unburnt brick, heavily thatched, and very neat and clean, with a pillared verandah in front, and a roomy loose box for each horse. The native servants in a comfortable undress of cotton jacket and

drawers, were sitting on the smooth earth outside in the sun smoking. One of the animals heard his master's voice and whinnied. Colonel Treveryan was a good judge of a horse, and all he had were worth having. He considered it part of a district-officer's duty to be thoroughly well set up in that way. There was a pair of Australian carriage horses, Walers as they are called in India. These were good-looking bays about fifteen-two, with plenty of substance and not badly bred. A Waler is not quite as good as the best English horse, but the breed is improving yearly; and a good Waler is not to be despised, either for saddle or harness. Then there was a pair of stud-bred chestnut geldings, better looking than the Walers but lighter, which Colonel Treveryan generally drove in a stanhope. Two more Walers filled up the six loose boxes in the main stable. These were real beauties, —Romulus and Remus, a brown and a bay, almost as handsome as English thoroughbreds. Both were well up to Colonel Treveryan's weight; and both would go perfectly straight at a charging boar, which is the best possible test of a horse's courage. Their master gave them many a chance of showing it, for he was a keen sportsman. In a smaller stable detached from the main building was Helen's horse, Sultan, a little gray Arab about fourteen-two. To Guy Langley and Dale he looked like a pony, with his compact frame and low round withers; but they could appreciate the clean short legs, and admire the beautiful

blood head, with its broad jaw and forehead and intelligent eye. Like most good Arabs, Sultan seemed small in the stable, but stood double the size—another animal altogether when mounted and moving.

People write to *The Field* that Arabs cannot hold a candle to English horses. Of course they cannot if you put the two together on a racecourse, or to carry a heavy man over a grass country. You might as well expect a Brixham trawler to run before a summer breeze against a racing crack. But try both in a beat to windward against a south-west gale with a big Atlantic sea coming round the Lizard, and you will see. And try the Arab and the English horse on rough service, with scanty food and bad water and long marches, and you will see again.

Away in another stable by herself was Bess, who laid her ears back and snapped when they came to her. Colonel Treveryan admired her duly, and thereby won Dale's heart. Then they told Pooran to put her in the cart, and walked back to the house.

They found tea ready in the drawing-room, and Helen Treveryan ready to dispense it. She had looked beautiful before, but to Guy's eyes, and to Dale's, she looked still better now. She generally rode with her father in the evening, and she had dressed for her ride before coming out. Her habit was light gray, in deference to the climate; but it fitted her like a glove, and showed off to perfection the straight well-made figure. In those days women did not wear waistcoats and

loose jackets, and ride with their elbows out. There was no dress in which a graceful woman looked so graceful as in her riding-habit. Helen Treveryan was essentially graceful, and the dress was exactly what she required. The shade of gray too was well suited to her light brown hair and clear skin; and with a round gray hat to match, and trim white cuffs and collar fastened by the plainest of little brooches, her whole get-up was thoroughly workmanlike.

A few minutes later, when Colonel Treveryan had finished his tea and changed his clothes, they all came out together on to the front steps. The two horses were standing on the gravel below. They looked up with a low whinny as they recognised Helen's voice, and she came down and petted them both, and made them each happy with a piece of sugar. Guy watched her with keen satisfaction, and asked if he could mount her. She hesitated for an instant, and looked round for Colonel Treveryan. 'Thank you,' she said; 'my father always mounts me;' and then fearing from the look on Guy's face that she had been ungracious, she added, 'But he has deserted me to-day. Would you really not mind helping me?' As she said it, Guy saw a sudden delicate flush come over her cheek and neck. It was still there as the little foot in its smart boot of yellow Russia leather was disengaged from his hand, and she settled herself in the saddle. Then Colonel Treveryan mounted, and the two rode away together, followed by their *syces* on foot, old Remus stepping

off as quietly as if he were returning from a long march, his straight-cut tail swinging regularly at each step, while the Arab danced alongside as if his pasterns were made of india-rubber, his neck and long swish tail arched, trying to look as if he were fifteen hands high, and succeeding fairly well. His rider sat him perfectly, her figure erect but supple, and her hands in her lap.

When the boys had got into their dog-cart and given the mare her head, there was a moment's pause, and then Guy said, 'By Jove, Chimp, what a jolly girl! and as handsome as paint.' And Chimp answered, 'Stunning; and about as nice as they make 'em in these parts.' And they drove back, enlarging upon the subject with all the poetical freedom which characterises the language of the British subaltern.

CHAPTER IX

AN INDIAN COLD WEATHER

YOU cannot talk of winter in the plains of India. There is something dark and cold in the very sound of the word ; and you cannot use it when week after week the sky over your head is a cloudless blue, and the flowers are in blossom. It is more like spring, and yet it is not spring. Englishmen in India call it simply the 'cold weather.'

The cold weather of 1876-77 had one distinctive feature. Early in the year Lord Lytton, Disraeli's Viceroy, had succeeded Lord Northbrook, and an active policy was in favour with the new Government. Before the rainy season came to an end and the sky cleared, it was known that there would soon be a grand gathering at Delhi, the old capital of the Moguls, and that the Queen would be proclaimed Empress of India. All over the country great preparations began to be made for the ceremony.

Moreover, rumours began to circulate as to the possibility of stirring events beyond the north-west frontier. It was said that Lord Lytton had come out

determined to bring the 'Central Asian question' to a head. Russian aggression was to be faced in Afghanistan as well as in Turkey. The old policy of inaction was to be abandoned, and our relations with the Amir were to be put upon a proper footing. Those who could understand the signs of the times foresaw trouble; and the minds of men in India, Europeans and natives alike, were filled with a sense of coming excitement.

Nevertheless, in a quiet place like Syntia things went on very much as usual. The Thirtieth Lancers were not to form part of the army which the Viceroy proposed to assemble at Delhi; and though there was to be a *darbar* on the 1st of January, the younger members of the community were not greatly concerned in these matters. To Guy Langley and Dale they promised a little more amusement, and this was all.

The cold weather being the drill season in India the Thirtieth had plenty of work. Colonel Aylmer was not a man to let them rust. The mornings were spent in parades or inspections, and no small portion of the rest of the day was also filled up. It is a mistake to suppose that a soldier in India has little or nothing to do. During the long summer months, no doubt, he has much time on his hands, but even then there is work to be done; and from the middle of October to the middle of April the military machine is in full swing. Still after all there is, as there should be, a considerable margin of leisure and pleasure

in a soldier's life. You pay him next to nothing, and you expect him to die for you whenever called upon ; it is only reasonable that he should have some compensations.

Colonel Aylmer was always ready to give his officers leave within reasonable limits, and he liked them to be sportsmen. Many a bright cloudless day Guy and Dale spent walking over the wet rice-fields, or wading through the *jheels*, in that most fascinating of occupations, snipe-shooting. They caught the knack before long, particularly Dale, who was the steadier shot of the two ; and in the evening, when they had changed their wet clothes under a spreading *peepul* tree, and were in the cart again with the mare stepping out for home, they usually carried with them, for distribution among their friends, a goodly number of birds. Occasionally a bag of twenty or thirty couple of snipe was increased towards sunset by a dozen wild duck, shot at some favourite piece of water round which they would come wheeling again and again before giving up all hope of settling. All this means chills and fever at times ; but the boys were young.

Sometimes they drove away in the early morning, after a hasty breakfast, so as to arrive by daybreak on the edge of the grain-fields, where the antelope came from the great grass plains to feed on the growing crops. Often enough this ended in disappointment. A watchful doe gave the alarm, and there was a hasty

useless shot or two at a hundred and fifty yards, as the beautiful beast they had been stalking went away in tremendous bounds over the long grass before settling down to his gallop. At times, however, they were rewarded. As they lay in some dry water-hole or thick patch of cover, the young buck came quietly within reach of them, unsuspecting of evil, his brown back and yellowish belly showing clearly against the morning sky; or some veteran of many summers, almost coal-black above and white below, his long slender spiral horns lying along his back, gradually approached them, stalking slowly forward alone, or playing with his brown does. Then there was a sudden report from Guy's rifle, or the little '360 express, with a bullet like a bit of pencil, which Dale used for buck-shooting; and as the smoke cleared away, they saw the does scattering through the grass, and a dark shape on the ground struggling vainly to get up; and the native *shikaris* ran in and cut the poor beast's throat, to make it lawful food—*halál*.

Then the pig-sticking; the drive out in the evening to a camp under the trees; and the merry camp dinner; and the long sweet sleep in an airy tent; and the mountain in the morning light; and the wait at the edge of the jungle, spear in hand, while the sound of the beat came nearer and nearer; and the sudden sight of the great gray boar, galloping out defiantly, straight before him; and the mad pursuit over broken ground, and the fierce swerve and charge, and

the thrill of the spear as the point went home, and the long savage fight, and the dogged, pitiful, gallant death. Lee managed the pig-sticking. He knew the country thoroughly, he was always well mounted, and he rode as if he had no neck. He soon taught Guy and Dale to understand the game; and such a game. There is no sport on earth, not one, like a fight with a fighting boar.

Apart from sport, there was always something to do in the cool clear evenings. Polo had not then been worked out to a science, but it already had taken strong root in India, and directly the Thirtieth had got some ponies together they began playing twice a week. Most of the Civil officers were away in camp, but all the ladies used to assemble to watch the game; and it was very bright and sociable. At first the Thirtieth played extremely badly, and did their best to kill themselves and each other, but they improved fast, which was more than the ground did. A few weeks after the rains ceased it was as hard as iron; and the clatter of the ponies' hoofs sounded as if they were galloping on pavement. A fall then was no joke; but when one is young nothing matters.

When there was no polo, there was tennis and Badminton at the Colonel's, or the Commissioner's, if the Commissioner was in the Station; or a 'lady's evening' at the racket-court among the mango trees. There was a very fair racket-court at Syntia. It had been built many years before by some sporting civilian

who lived in the days when Indian Civil Servants remained in one place half their lives, and were rich enough to do these things.

Then there was always the Club. This was a great institution at Syntia. The Club consisted of a small thatched house containing a billiard-room, a card-room, and a reading-room, where one could see the papers and magazines. Close to the house were some good tennis-courts, while the racket-court and swimming-bath were not far off. Every afternoon almost you could get a rubber after lunch if so disposed; and in the evening about five o'clock, if there was nothing else to be done, a number of people came round, riding or driving, to play or look on at the tennis. After the play was over they sat looking out over the great river which flowed close by under the steep sandy bank, until the quick night came down upon them and the dew began to fall. Then there was a general lighting of carriage lamps, and many friendly good-nights, and they scattered away in the darkness, as often as not to meet again in batches at various hospitable dinner-tables. The wine was generally good; and if the conversation was not highly intellectual, it was cheery and free from dulness. Every one knew every one else pretty well, and no one was shy or stiff.

Occasionally the afternoon was varied by a riding party on the racecourse, a fine open plain with a few palm trees in the centre, where you could have a two-

mile gallop ; or there was an evening picnic. All who cared to go met and rode out together along the soft country roads, until they came upon the little encampment where the native servants awaited them. Perhaps the spot chosen was some old ruin in the forest, where the trees rose through the shattered masonry of a neglected temple, or overhung the stone steps of a tank which some forgotten great man had made, and named with his name. The darkness was generally beginning to gather before the party set out on their homeward ride, and the stars were bright before they got back.

Then there was a small fortnightly dance at the mess-house, which had a very good floor. Sometimes, when no one came over from Baner, there was rather a dearth of ladies ; but the few ladies who were there did not seem to mind. Once there was a big ball at Baner to which all Syntia went off together by train.

Altogether the weeks passed rapidly and brightly enough, and before Christmas came round Guy Langley was surprised to find how contented he was with his Indian life. It seemed to him that the country was delightful, and that people who could see in it nothing but weariness and vexation of spirit must be strangely constituted. He was no doubt perfectly right ; but he had seen Indian life under favourable conditions, and had not seen much of it. Moreover, he had seen Helen Treveryan. Though as yet he did not fully

recognise the fact, that was really the main cause of his contentment. No doubt he owed it in part to his good-tempered disposition, and to the artistic sense which made him appreciate the picturesque side of his new life. His books too helped him. He was a desultory reader, but he read largely, and a man who reads cannot be dull. But at the bottom of it all was Helen Treveryan.

It was no wonder ; indeed, the wonder would have been if Guy had failed to be attracted by her. Always quick to appreciate beauty, he could not help admiring Helen's sweet face ; and to his rather fastidious taste there was something even more pleasing in the gracefulness of her movements and the look of refinement and breeding which is above all mere beauty of colour or shape. Moreover, Guy was a gentleman, and could recognise and appreciate the straightness and purity which made her so frank in her manners.

They were thrown constantly together in the easy familiar intercourse of a small Indian Station, where acquaintance naturally ripens fast. They met almost daily, and met after a few days on a footing of unaffected friendliness. Helen Treveryan was fond of riding, and Guy was very often by her side as the party cantered round the racecourse, or when they rode slowly back from their picnics through the early moonlight. She danced well, and Guy always got a couple of waltzes with her in the evenings at the mess-house. She played tennis, gracefully, if not very

strongly ; and they often found themselves paired off together on the smooth cement courts at the Club. Even in his reading Guy found Helen a companion. She had a taste for poetry as well as for music, which is not a very common combination ; and Guy was surprised to hear her speaking naturally and easily of books which not one woman in six knows anything about. She cared more for Longfellow and Scott than for Shelley or Dickens ; but though he did not agree with her, he thought none the less of her for that. Her want of affectation too was very delightful. She enjoyed life heartily, and was full of quiet fun. Yet she could be very dignified on occasion. Once Denham had presumed on her pleasant manner, and had said something to her which he ought not to have said to any girl. She did not understand him, but she knew instinctively that he meant harm, and she treated him at the time and afterwards with a quiet coldness which effectually prevented any repetition of the offence. Guy did not know the cause, but he noticed and was pleased at her evident avoidance of his enemy.

On Sundays Guy was generally free to do as he liked ; and he gradually got into the way of spending his day in the Civil Lines instead of attending Mrs. Dangerfield's rather wild lunch parties. He used to ride or drive over in time for the morning service. He had not till then been by any means a regular churchgoer, and he did not perhaps attend very

closely now ; but he liked to sit in the pretty little half-empty church, with the soft air coming through the open windows ; to hear at intervals the singing of the small but carefully trained choir ; and to listen for the clear sweet voice, which came to him through the rest, until sometimes it seemed to him as if all others had faded away, and Helen was singing alone. The Pádre's sermons were short, and good enough ; but by that time Guy was getting impatient, and they used to seem to him very uninteresting. Directly they were over he was out under the porch, answering friendly greetings and looking for the beautiful face, which he knew would come out of the little stone doorway at the foot of the staircase when the last notes of the voluntary had ceased.

Then, if Colonel Treveryan was in Syntia, which he often managed to be on Sundays, Guy would receive and accept the invitation to lunch, which was always ready as a matter of course for any one who had come over from cantonments. Occasionally, though not often, he was the only guest ; and though Helen left the gentlemen to themselves after lunch he was able in these Sunday visits to see a great deal of her. He saw nothing that was not thoroughly pure and ladylike.

It was all very pleasant, and very certain to end in one way ; and before long a few quick eyes in Syntia had begun to perceive what was coming.

Mrs. Stewart was the first to suspect that Guy was

seriously attracted. Her apprehension was quickened by something of the nature of jealousy, for she had been accustomed to regard the intellectual side of him as her peculiar property. She was surprised and rather annoyed to hear him discussing a passage of *In Memoriam* with Helen Treveryan, and still more so afterwards to find that a somewhat sarcastic remark on the subject was not at all well received. Something she said about this opened the eyes of Mrs. Dangerfield and Mrs. Aylmer. Mrs. Dangerfield, in her reckless marauding way, at once attacked Guy, and accused him of deserting old friends for new. He repelled the charge warmly, but he failed to remove her doubts. He failed equally with Mrs. Aylmer. She was attracted by Helen; and did not like the idea of Guy being too constantly with her if, as was probable, he ‘meant nothing.’ She had an interest in him as well. A few days after Mrs. Dangerfield had attacked him, she got an opening. Guy had come to lunch, rather early, and was sitting in the drawing-room talking to her. He said something about the Treveryans, and she took up the subject quite naturally. ‘What a dear girl Miss Treveryan is,’ she said; ‘I don’t think I ever saw a girl I took such a fancy to.’

Guy’s eyes brightened. ‘Yes; isn’t she awfully nice?’ he answered in the ridiculous language of the day. ‘It isn’t only that she is pretty, but she does everything so well. She is the best dancer I ever knew, though they can all dance out here; and she

rides like an angel, and she is such a lady all over.'

Mrs. Aylmer smiled at his enthusiasm. 'Take care, Mr. Langley,' she said. 'I am afraid this is getting serious.'

Guy coloured. 'Oh no, there is nothing of that sort. I have never said a word to her that I might not have said to any one.'

Mrs. Aylmer dropped the subject. What Guy said was quite true. They had met and enjoyed being together, with a young honest pleasure, but neither of them had thought of anything more. Nevertheless, they were on the old road, and it was not long before Guy began to confess to himself that Helen Treveryan's presence had become an intense pleasure to him. If she failed to appear any evening when he had expected to see her, he felt a disappointment which was sufficient to spoil everything. If she seemed inattentive to anything he said, or too much interested by the affairs of others, particularly if she got into close conversation with Lord Enleigh, whose soldierly enthusiasm she liked, he felt hurt and depressed. Then a few gentle words from her dissipated his soreness like a cloud.

Gradually the magic of her presence grew upon him and overcame his senses, until the sight of her face, and the touch of her cool white hand, became his one delight and longing. He could not look at her without feeling that his eyes betrayed him; and if he spoke to her, it

seemed to him that he could no longer trust his voice. The very brush of her dainty dress made his heart beat.

Others were not watching him so closely as he imagined. They had their own affairs to think about, and if he had kept quiet his feelings might perhaps have been unnoticed by the bulk of his neighbours ; but he tried to conceal them by ostentatiously professing his admiration for Helen Treveryan's beauty and goodness. This was powerless to deceive those who had gone through the fever, and it attracted the attention of those who had thought nothing about the matter before. People began to see and to talk.

Helen Treveryan saw nothing. She was enjoying herself thoroughly, and she liked Guy Langley better than any of the other young men, who all joined in making things pleasant for her ; but he had never spoken to her of love, and she had never thought of it. As yet she was quite free and unembarrassed in her behaviour towards him.

He felt this, and was nettled by it, and as the weeks went by, there came over him an uncontrollable longing to stir her heart and make her care for him before all. He did not allow himself to follow out his thoughts to their legitimate end. Marriage was a thing that hardly ever crossed his mind. If any one had suggested it to him, he would have laughed at the idea. But he longed to feel that Helen Treveryan was not indifferent to him. Whether he wanted her altogether for life he did not stop to inquire, but he wanted her to love him then.

The rest might take care of itself. He was not dishonourable. He would have repelled with unfeigned horror the idea of doing her wrong ; and he did not deliberately intend to make love to her and desert her. He was simply young and thoughtless. The desire of the moment excluded from his sight all other considerations, and the desire of the moment was to enjoy Helen Treveryan's presence, and to know that she preferred him to all others.

Meanwhile Colonel Treveryan, who was generally absent in camp, and was of a straightforward simple nature, suspected nothing. Mrs. Hunter, who, in the absence of her husband, also in camp in his district, had come over to stay with Helen, was perhaps not equally blind ; but Helen volunteered no confidences, and seemed quite heartwhole.

Hugh Dale did not fail to see that Guy's inclination for sport was lessening, and that his attendance on the ladies was becoming more and more regular ; but Guy's temper did not seem to have improved, and Dale found it better not to make any remarks on the subject. Being thoroughly good-natured and loyal, he accepted the position and said little about it to others.

CHAPTER X

CHRISTMAS WEEK

SUCH was the state of affairs when the Civil population of Syntia reassembled for the festivities of Christmas week.

Colonel Treveryan and his officers all came in from camp, and the preparations for the ceremony of the 1st of January were rapidly pushed on. A great programme had been arranged. Colonel Treveryan was to give a dance at the Club, and there were to be two mornings sky-racing; and Syntia had pluckily challenged Baner to play them at polo, at rackets, at cricket, and tennis; and the regiment was to give a dance too; and then there was to be the *durbar*, and after it, in the evening, a ball given by a Raja; and throughout the week every one was to keep open house, and put up as many friends from other stations as could be induced to come; and altogether Syntia meant to have a thoroughly good time. And Syntia certainly did have as good a time as an Indian '*mofussil* station' can manage to have.

Christmas Day that year fell on a Monday. During

the Saturday and Sunday the visitors came pouring in from all sides, by road and by rail. The houses were soon full, but those who could not find room in the houses were put under canvas. On the grass behind Colonel Treveryan's house there was a considerable camp; the white tents, all of one size and pattern, beautifully pitched in two level rows, and comfortably furnished. The other houses too had their gardens full of them. At every turn one saw the white points among the heavy green of the mango trees and palms, or glittering against the blue sky. Even the Andersons put up some unlucky visitors who had no particular friends; and the Pink 'un dispensed a royal hospitality to a party of very noisy young men who had been billeted upon him by Mrs. Hunter.

On Christmas morning the little church was full to overflowing. It all seemed very English. Helen Treveryan's white hands had been busy there as well as in her father's house, and she had found ready help from others. Pulpit and lectern and pillar and rail were wreathed with flowers and evergreens; and though the sky was blue outside, and the sun was shining brightly, many of the English men and women who gathered there that morning forgot for a time, as they listened to the Christmas service, that they were exiles, thousands of miles from 'home.' Their hearts were stirred by the familiar words. As the service went on, they joined in the singing until the whole building was filled by the unwonted volume of sound,

and the little Pádre's eyes sparkled with pleasure ; and through it all rose sweet and clear and true, like the song of a bird, the voice of a happy girl.

She and her father did their best to make it a 'merry Christmas' to all about them. There were no English poor in Syntia, but there were a few people of mixed blood to whom Colonel Treveryan's liberality was welcome ; and the native servants were given a feast in honour of the great day ; and they were also allowed to carry off the innumerable trays of fruit and sweetmeats which the native gentlemen of the district had sent to the Commissioner Sahib. They wrangled over the division of the spoil, and some of them ate too many good things and suffered for it, but they seemed to be happy.

Meanwhile the white Sahibs amused themselves after their kind. There was a sumptuous lunch in almost every house ; they spent the afternoon in playing tennis, in riding, in boating on the river, and in hunting up old acquaintances ; and then they all had merry Christmas dinners and rejoiced over blazing mince-pies and plum-puddings, and were more English than in England, while the champagne flowed like water.

When the ladies broke up, some of the men went off to the Club for the race lotteries. There was some quarrelling there between a sporting planter and a clean-shaved, square-jawed racing-man who was staying with Denham ; but this was stopped before much harm was done. Afterwards some of the Pink 'un's guests

sat up drinking whisky and soda and singing songs, which gradually grew stronger until they made the poor little fellow hot all over. His mind was sorely divided between the obligation to be polite to his guests and the duty of protesting against their language. He solved the difficulty by pleading hard work next day, and asking leave to go to bed. Then he said his prayers humbly, kneeling by his bedside with his hands over his ears, trying to shut out the sound of a specially horrid chorus, and asking forgiveness if he had done wrong in not speaking out.

As to the racing next day, perhaps the less said the better. The British subaltern, and generally the Englishman in India, is not at his best when he is pony-racing; and the meeting was not altogether a success. There was some bad language used, and some very inferior running. Dale unexpectedly pulled off a race on a new purchase of his, which was about the only thing Helen Treveryan enjoyed. Sitting on the carpeted steps of an earthen bank, watching the performances of a lot of second-rate ponies, generally badly matched and not too well ridden, is an amusement of which it is possible to have enough.

In the evening there was the Commissioner's dance at the Club. Helen and some of her father's guests had worked hard to prepare for this; and the place was prettily got up, and the floor good. The Thirtieth came over in force from cantonments, and every one seemed to enjoy the dance heartily.

On the Wednesday there were the rackets and lawn-tennis matches. Dale and Harrison of the Civil Service, also a Harrow boy who belonged to one of Colonel Treveryan's districts, represented Syntia at rackets. Dale was to play tennis in the afternoon, but he scoffed at the idea that it would be too much for him. 'Rot!' he said contemptuously. 'I'm not quite so soft as all that. I can play a set or two of pat-ball in the evening if we do have a close game.'

There was a large gathering in the gallery after breakfast, and they saw a first-rate fight. Dale and Harrison pulled off the doubles at last after a very close finish; but Dale was beaten in the single match by Spencer of the artillery, a tall, well-built man with a long reach, who never seemed to exert himself and was always at the right place, and had the most detestable service.

At tennis in the evening it was worse. There was to be a double for ladies and gentlemen, and a single for men only. Dale and Mrs. Lee represented Syntia. Mrs. Lee got excited and broke into voluble Irish, and made every one laugh, and then blushed furiously and looked very pretty. In the end they lost, the lady on the other side being too strong for Mrs. Lee. When it came to the singles a clumsy-looking man in a woollen jersey, Greenfield of the One Hundred and Tenth, came forth to do battle for Baner. He could play no other game, and made tennis the business of his life. His style was so ugly and his returns so slow that Syntia were very

confident. Nevertheless he won, after a long fight, Dale's quickness and hard wrist-play being fairly over-matched at last by the other man's unfailing certainty to get a ball up somehow, and his careful placing. Possibly Dale was a little tired too, in spite of his good condition, and besides, he did not profess to play 'pat-ball.'

So far Baner was one event ahead.

Next morning there was some more racing, and in the afternoon the polo-match. That was good fun. The play was not very scientific, but the teams were even, and throughout the result was doubtful. It was two goals all until the very end, and the excitement was tremendous when Guy Langley got away with the ball about the middle of the ground, and galloping and hitting like one inspired, succeeded within half a minute of time in making another goal for the Thirtieth.

It was a sweet moment to him, and the sweetest thing of all, as he cantered back past the line of carriages, was to see Helen's face flushed with excitement, and to hear her bright, 'Well done, Mr. Langley.'

On the Thursday evening the racing contingent departed. There remained the cricket, which would now be the deciding event. Syntia rather fancied themselves at this. They had expected to be beaten at polo, but they thought they could pull off the cricket-match. They had one exceptionally good bowler, a corporal in the Thirtieth, who was very fast and got on a big break at times. Two or three of the men could

bowl a bit too; and so could Dale and Guy, and Harrison used to be good at lobs. Then they had discovered that the little Pink 'un had been in the Tonbridge eleven, and kept wicket rather well. They had plenty of batting. The regimental doctor, Evans, a tall young fellow with sloping shoulders and a rather ugly private school style, who went in first with Dale for the Thirtieth, was almost certain to make runs; and there were several others—among them a sporting superintendent of post-offices, a very hard hitter with an extraordinary eye.

Dale had taken great trouble with the ground, and by dint of watering and rolling had really managed to get a very respectable pitch. He could not get Guy to practise as much as he wished, but on the whole he was confident, and the men were ready to back themselves at any odds.

There had been a good deal of chaff about the match, and both sides were now really keen to win. They began within two hours of the stated time, which is rare in India; and there was a considerable gathering to watch the game from the start. Syntia won the toss and went in. The men in the field wore helmets or pith hats or felt wideawakes, which looked odd; but the bowling was not to be despised, and the scoring was only moderate. Dale and the doctor made a good stand; but after that the wickets went down rapidly. The post-office man hit one ball out of the ground to square leg, and was then taken with a

yorker. Guy, after making three or four runs very prettily, played forward at a rather short-pitched one, and put up an easy catch. The Pink 'un stayed some time, and was then badly run out. The innings was over by lunch-time for 120.

After lunch Baner made almost the same number. Their captain, Major Clifford of the One Hundred and Tenth, a Winchester man, played real cricket. He had bowled well in the Syntia innings, slow medium pace, without much break, but with a very good length, and a most unpleasant spin. Now he set a good example by going in first and keeping his wicket up until very near the end of the innings, which closed for 123. He was well seconded by Spencer, the racket-player, who batted well for five-and-twenty. Guy Langley let him off once at cover-point, but it was a hard catch.

That night it was the Thirtieth dance, and there was much speculation and a little betting about the cricket-match. Dale and Guy Langley were still very confident. They thought they ought to have done much better; and that they would do so the second innings. Dale drank nothing all the evening except a little whisky and soda, and tried to induce Guy to follow his example. It was a very pleasant dance, but people were beginning to get a little tired now, and Colonel Treveryan's party left early; after which Guy thought it stale, flat, and unprofitable, and consoled himself by a second supper, and another glass or two of champagne.

The next day cricket began at eleven o'clock; and

in spite of the dance the play was keen. Syntia were in all the morning. Guy failed again, getting bowled, to his great vexation, just after the Treveryans had come on to the ground. But Dale played up well; and he and the post-office man had one very merry half-hour, during which they hit the bowling all over the ground and made fifty runs, to the great delight of the Thirtieth, who applauded wildly. The Pink 'un also did well, playing very steadily and making some nice cuts; and a private of the Thirtieth, who went in last, after lunch, without pads or gloves, and hit across at every ball, knocked up twenty in half as many minutes. Baner was left with nearly 200 to make.

'They can't do it, sir,' Corporal Humphry said decidedly to Dale, and Dale agreed.

But they meant to try. Major Clifford and Spencer went in, and for more than an hour they kept their wickets up, and not only kept their wickets up but scored fairly fast. They collared Humphry completely; Clifford putting him away to leg for threes and fours, and Spencer sending him several times to the off boundary with a very pretty late cut. Dale tried a number of changes, and at last got Spencer's wicket; but Clifford remained, and though the wickets began to fall pretty fast now the score rose steadily. Dale put on Harrison with lobs; but Clifford, who was still in and thoroughly set, hit him clean out of the ground three times in one over. Guy went on for a couple of overs, but could not get on the spot. The

soldier change-bowlers were freely punished, and the telegraph showed 150, and 160, and 170, and two easy catches were dropped in the long field. It was really getting very unpleasant, and Dale began to grow warm. At last Clifford stepped out to one that he ought to have played, and the Pink 'un put his wicket down very smartly. Two more to fall and twenty runs to make. Twelve of the twenty runs were made, and still there were only eight wickets down. The excitement was getting almost painful. Then, amid a scream of delight, Dale, who had put himself on again, ran up and got a man off his own bowling—an almost impossible catch, with one hand, low down, not ten yards from the bat. Nine down and eight runs to get; every ball was watched now with breathless interest. During the next over three runs were made by a lucky snick. Four to tie.

Dale had sent Guy out to the boundary for a catch. He was within twenty yards of the Treveryans' carriage. Clifford and Spencer had walked round and were standing by it talking to Helen. As they stood, the batsman at the opposite end, a hard-hitting artillery bombardier, who had made twenty runs and was playing very well and pluckily, stepped out to the first ball of the over, which was pitched up a little too far. He caught it, a fair half-volley, and the ball flew away high in the air straight for the place where Guy had been put. Dale, in his excitement, turned round and called out, 'Now you've got him!' and waited with

a confident anxiety for the result. Guy was a pretty safe catch as a rule, and as the ball rose he rejoiced at his chance; but he had too much time to think about it. As it hung in the air, he remembered that he had dropped one the day before, and a horrid doubt suddenly came to him that he might drop this too. Who does not know the miserable suspense of a moment like that, when you are waiting for a ball to come down? How slowly it seems to move at first, and with what a diabolical swiftness it gets through the last twenty feet. Guy stood watching it steadily. There was no judging required. It was hit right into his hands, and he scarcely had to move a yard. Would it never come?

He was hot with rage and disgust as he heard the involuntary 'Oh' of disappointment all round him, followed by an unseemly shout on the part of the enemy. 'Very sorry, Chimp,' he called out rather sullenly as he threw the ball up, and cursed his luck. Only two to tie now. The next ball was a good one, and the third was better. It grazed the bombardier's leg stump close by the bail, which shivered and settled again. Then the bombardier stepped out once more, and drove Dale to the boundary, all along the ground, and the match was over.

Poor Guy! It really was cruelly hard lines. To miss an easy catch like that and lose the match by it, and right in front of Helen's eyes. He walked back to the pavilion-tent feeling sore and ashamed of him-

self. He little knew how her woman's heart went out to him in the humiliation of the moment. As the catch fell, Clifford exclaimed in a tone of delight, 'Muckered it, by Jove! and right into his hands.' Then he went on: 'I wonder what year Langley was in the Eton eleven. They must have been weak, I expect. He doesn't seem to be much good.'

Helen's big eyes flashed. She was very young still. 'Mr. Dale said it was a very strong eleven,' she said. 'He told me they beat Harrow that year; and I think they beat Winchester in one innings.' Clifford looked up in surprise and laughed. 'That is one for me. I am sorry I spoke.' She caught his look, and turned the conversation rapidly. A minute later the match ended. Soon afterwards her father joined her, and Guy came with him, looking crestfallen. 'Beaten after all,' he said, 'and all my fault. I feel horribly ashamed of myself.' Helen was a little out of temper at the moment, and Guy's humility did not soften her heart. 'I thought you were a little too sure of winning,' she answered, in a tone that was unusual with her. Colonel Treveryan laughed, and she turned upon him with a wrath that was only half assumed. 'Don't laugh, father. I hate being beaten. I think Syntia played abominably.' Then the grays stepped off, the carriage wheels rolling noiselessly over the short dry grass, and Guy turned away, hurt and unhappy.

The Sunday's rest was needed, for several of the party, men and women, were beginning to feel the

effect of the past week's dissipation. Guy Langley, after some doubt, rode over to the Civil Station for morning church; and Helen, who was feeling guilty, came and asked him to stay to lunch. There were a number of people there, and she said little to him, but there was an unspoken apology in the tone of her voice.

After tea Guy sent for his dress-clothes, and went on to dine with the Hunters, who were always glad to see him. He got home late, as the clocks were striking the last hour of the old year. On the whole it had been a very happy one.

.

CHAPTER XI

THE PROCLAMATION OF THE EMPIRE

DELHI, the city of the Moguls, was to be the scene of a splendid pageant on the first day of 1877. Following up a suggestion made by Lord Ellenborough many years before, the Viceroy was that day to proclaim to the assembled chiefs and notables of India that Her Majesty the Queen had assumed the Imperial title.

Vast preparations had been made for the event. The native princes had been brought together from every part of the country. Rajput and Mahratta and Mahometan and Sikh, great and small, from the ruler of millions to the ruler of a few thousands, all had assembled to do honour to the English Queen. The rulers of British provinces were present also, each with a large camp; and there were some thousands of troops. Looking down from the historic Ridge, where a little body of Englishmen and loyal Indians had stood at bay, besieging and besieged, through the terrible summer of 1857, one saw in every direction long streets of tents—a real city of canvas. There our fiercest fighting had been twenty years before;

there the English Empire was now to be formally proclaimed. It was proclaimed with great pomp, and on the whole Lord Lytton was successful in a very difficult task. There were murmurs of course. The heralds and tabards and banners and trumpets made the enemy blaspheme. There was too much sky-blue satin, too little gray steel. The ceremonial undoubtedly savoured of Drury Lane.

Still it did good. The immense concourse impressed the native chiefs, many of whom then met for the first time—met to do homage together at the foot of the English throne. Among them were men who could remember the days when the English power was still struggling for supremacy. The first who rose in his place to hail the Empress-Queen was one whose own soldiery had stood against us in two bloody battles thirty years before. Throughout the continent of India men felt that the ceremonial had a real meaning. It was not all burlesque.

In connection with the grand gathering at Delhi were minor ceremonials at all the local centres.

In Syntia the day began with a parade of the Thirtieth and the detachment of Native Infantry ; and the Colonel announced in the presence of all who cared to attend that the Queen was now Empress of India. There were three ringing cheers and a *feu-de-joie*, and much fluttering of pennons and shimmer of lance points and bayonets.

After breakfast there was the *durbar*. This was held

in the grounds of a large house which had been built by a wealthy planter many years before. It now belonged to one of the principal landowners of the district. The house stood high, overlooking the river and the flat country beyond. The grounds were open and extensive. It had been arranged that the *darbar* should be held in a large *shamiana* or tent pitched in the garden.

Eleven o'clock was fixed for the ceremony. Long before that time the native gentlemen whose rank entitled them to a seat had begun to assemble. Many of these had come from the outlying districts of the province, and had found quarters in the town of Syntia, or were encamped in the neighbourhood. The day was a great one, and it furnished occasion for a fierce rivalry between the more important families, who had been open enemies in days gone by. Now the Pax Britannica had descended upon them, and they were obliged to refrain from attacking one another; but the old feuds were alive. The Civil officers had had much trouble in settling the relative precedence of some who had not before met in public ceremonial, and there had been quarrelling between the rival retinues, and eventually an affray in which three or four men were wounded. However, all had passed off without serious disturbance, and on the morning of the 1st of January, though there was still some smouldering discontent, all outward differences had been composed. They came to the *darbar* with evident interest and enjoyment, in every variety of dress and vehicle.

The fine old Raja of Jainagar drove up in a lofty barouche lined with primrose satin, the harness bright with massive silver mountings, and half a dozen horsemen cantering behind him. The silver-mounted harness was broken in one place and tied up with cord; and the horsemen were dressed in badly-fitting uniforms, imitated from our Native Cavalry; and the animals they rode were miserable ponies only fit for the knacker's yard. But in the East splendour and squalor always go hand in hand. The silk and the silver made a brave show, and the horsemen raised a most impressive dust, and who cared for the cord-tied harness and the broken knees of the horses? Not the crowd. They said, '*Shāvāsh!* The Raja Sahib has a fine *sowarree*.' And the Raja Sahib sat alone on the back seat of his carriage, looking very magnificent in his coat of brocade, with a necklace of huge pearls round his neck, and his gold-hilted sword in his hands; while two very fat sons sat opposite to him. Behind him clung three grooms in coats of red English cloth. Two had hats of the same pattern, while the third had a dirty white turban, and the tail of his red coat bore as an ornament some gold lettering, W. F. 104 A. 3, which marked the end of the piece.

The Raja Sahib and his retinue looked funny to English eyes; but he was a gentleman and a power in the countryside. He had done loyal service to us twenty years before, during the Mutiny, when the hearts of men all round him were failing them for

fear ; and he was held in high esteem by the English Government, who had made him a Knight of the Star of India.¹

Close behind the Raja Sahib came a plain close carriage, in which was seated Ram Lal Das, the great money-lender, who was only too well known to the leading families of the neighbourhood. Ram Lal Das was a rather handsome man, very simply dressed in white, with a short well-groomed beard, and one large pearl in each ear. He was a powerful man too in his own way, and a sincere friend of the English, as well he might be. There was no periodical squeezing of money-lenders under the British rule.

Next to the money-lender's carriage came another of the same description belonging to Mr. Chatterjee, the Bengali pleader. Mr. Chatterjee was a stout, smooth-faced man, wearing a flat hat like a solidified halo, and a kind of frockcoat of semi-transparent

¹ Why does the English Government make Knights of the Star of India, or Knights of the Indian Empire, or Knights of St. Michael and St. George? It is well meant no doubt ; but surely in the interests of Imperial unity it is a mistake. An Englishman serving his country in India or Australia or Africa or America is an Englishman still. If he is worthy of an honour let him have an English honour, not a local one which marks him as something different from the English who stay at home. The principle is recognised in the Army ; why not all through ? An Englishman should be regarded as an Englishman wherever he is ; and as to the Raja Sahib, if you suppose he would not rather have the title of Maharaja, or a piece of land, or a couple of guns added to his salute, than a silver star which his heirs must give up at his death, you know nothing of India. Of course you can create a demand for these local decorations ; but it is an artificial and unwholesome demand.

yellowish silk, which in no way concealed his ample proportions. In the fastening at the breast was a gorgeous gold watch-chain. Mr. Chatterjee was connected with the vernacular press, and was ready to declaim on any subject in the world at a moment's notice. He professed to have discarded many of the prejudices of his fathers, but was, in fact, as superstitious as the most ignorant villager. He was pleasant enough to talk to, but you could not trust him, and he was an ass, though a cleverish ass. He had relatives in every Government office in the Bengal Presidency, and received from them information on all sorts of subjects, which he turned into rupees.

Threading his way through the block of palankeens and carriages came Moulvi Roshan-ud-din, the most influential man of the Mahometan community in the town of Syntia. He had been to Mecca, and had the reputation of being a great scholar and a very devout follower of the Prophet. It was difficult to get on with Roshan-ud-din. He was extremely polite to any Englishman; would *salaam* to you deeply with his eyes cast down, and would speak most softly and courteously in answer to any question. But there it ended. The dark eyes, with their discoloured whites, were hardly ever lifted to yours, and the thin bearded face showed no sign of expression. There was always the hand gently moving the beads along the string of the rosary; and the low voice, with its guttural Arabic pronunciation. You got no further. What would this man be in

time of trouble? What had he been twenty years before? A friend perhaps. Who knows?

They assembled in the grounds of the *darbar* house — Rajas and money-lenders, and pleaders and preachers, and all the rest of the community, and were marshalled to their seats by the English officials. The *shamiana* was a large square tent, or canopy, the flat canvas roof supported by wooden pillars draped with twisted cloth. In the centre was an open space, round three sides of which were disposed, in the shape of a horseshoe, the seats of the principal persons. At the top was a chair for the Commissioner, Colonel Treveryan, who represented the British Government. To his right the front row of chairs was filled by English officers, military and civil, the former in full uniform, the latter in evening dress, which looked very odd in the bright sunshine. To the left sat some of the chief native gentlemen in order of precedence. The rest of the tent was filled with rows of chairs occupied by Europeans and natives. The centre space and the broad red carpeted road to the doorway were kept clear by a few men of the Thirtieth Lancers in full uniform, facing inwards. They were picked men, and looked very fine as they stood there, motionless as statues, the embodiment of English discipline and military power.

At last all the guests were seated, with the help of little Goldney, who was very shy and courteous, and Anderson, who was very fussy and dictatorial, in

spite of a coat which was not in a condition to face daylight. Then word was sent to Colonel Treveryan, who came in, wearing his military uniform, and walked up to his seat, the assembly standing to receive him.

The ceremonial that followed was very simple. When the band outside had played a bar or two of the national anthem, and the assembly had sat down, Colonel Treveryan, who remained standing, addressed them and informed them that Her Majesty the Queen had assumed the Imperial title. At the most impressive moment of his speech something occurred in the part of the tent where the ladies were sitting, and one or two of them laughed. Women have no bump of veneration; no respect for solemn things. Otherwise the oration was received with decorous silence until it ended. Applause was beginning; but Colonel Treveryan checked it by holding up his hand, and repeated his words in Hindustani. Then he said, 'Gentlemen, the Queen, Empress of India.' And a hearty cheer was given by the Englishmen present—the natives sitting silent and motionless. As the cheer died away a gun pealed outside. The Raja Sahib had asked to be allowed to send two guns in to Syntia to fire a salute.

While the salute was going on, Colonel Treveryan gave the signal for departure by leaving his place and leading the Raja Sahib to the entrance of the tent. Then the great men drove off in order of precedence with much crowding and shouting, most of the Europeans walking away in the cool January sun to

some corner where they had left their carriages. The ladies had an exit of their own at the back.

An hour later the great tent was empty, but for a few nearly naked coolies who were removing the chairs in order that the tables might be laid for the ball supper in the evening.

The management of this entertainment had been confided by the Raja to his own district officer, Hunter; the only condition being that the Sahib should do everything in the best possible way, so that the Raja might give pleasure to his white guests and show his loyalty to the Queen. Money was no object; but the ball must be the best ever given in Syntia.

Hunter, or rather Mrs. Hunter, was thoroughly competent to carry out the work. The house was tastefully decorated, and the pretty rolling grounds were lighted up, and the floor was almost too good. No sticky wax was allowed to profane it; but all day long a line of coolies, carefully supervised, were tenderly rubbing the boards with smooth-cut cocoanuts, until the surface had assumed a hard true polish and shone like a pebble. The band of the Thirtieth were to play in an adjoining verandah, which was tented in to retain the sound. All round the hall were well-furnished rooms; and behind, in nooks of the cool dark terrace overlooking the river, were a number of seats. The supper was everything it should be, and the wine was the very best. The programme was characteristic of Mrs. Hunter. She liked her dancing strong, and objected to wasting

the evening in squares. There was a quadrille to begin with, and then a succession of waltzes, with a very rare polka or gallop and three sets of Lancers. Supper at twelve, with about half a dozen couples told off for the centre table, and every one else to make his own arrangements. As aide-de-camp and general assistant she had secured Dale, who was as keen about a dance as he was about everything else. He had worked nobly and succeeded well; and he was at her elbow when the guests began to arrive.

It was a beautiful night as Guy climbed to his place on the Thirtieth's drag after dinner. The stars were shining out of a cloudless sky; and there was just cold enough in the air to make an ulster comfortable. Away towards the native town a rocket occasionally rose and broke against the darkness. As they drove on a faint glow appeared in this quarter, and it gradually brightened until they topped the last rise in the road and the town lay below them. It was a pretty sight.

There is perhaps no country in the world where illuminations are so beautiful as in India. Instead of the hard glitter of gas, and the still harder and whiter glare of the electric light, and the stiff decorations which hurt the eye in an English or French or German town, there is the soft deep glow produced by countless thousands of the native *chirāghs*. These are little earthenware saucers, with a few spoonfuls of oil in them and a loose wick of twisted cotton. The light they give, when in large numbers, is peculiarly warm and

rich ; and the very simplicity of the instrument used makes it the more flexible and effective. Instead of being confined to artificial patterns, expressed in gas-pipes, the Indian puts rows of lamps along the edge of his flat roof, along the sills and arches of his doors and windows, at every point where the little saucers will easily stand or hang. An Indian street is full of picturesque variations of architecture, and these are picked out in lines of yellow light which adapt themselves to the graceful forms of the buildings. Sometimes the Indian spoils the whole thing by erecting stiff horizontal lines of bamboos along his roads, and stringing lamps on them, which shows that the beauty of the usual illuminations is not wholly due to artistic taste ; but this is rare. The rolling ground upon which Syntia was built, and the masses of dark trees which broke the lines of street and wall, and the smooth surface of the river beyond reflecting innumerable lights, all added to the beauty of the scene. Away to the right Guy could make out the *darbar* house, which stood alone and high at some distance from the town. The drive was picked out by a line of lights, and he could see the carriages going slowly up through the glare. There and in the town was much noise and confusion. An Indian, like an Italian, can do nothing without shouting.

As the party from the cantonment walked up the broad stone steps, they saw at the top, waiting to receive them, the giver of the entertainment. The

Raja Sahib was resplendent with silk and jewels, and looked a striking figure. Fully six feet in height, with a handsome face and courteous dignified manner, he was an admirable specimen of his class, the Rajput aristocracy, who are ready to be our firm friends if we will have them so, and who can bring their country with them.

Shaking hands with the Raja Sahib and the two fat sons, who were magnificent but very inferior to their father in appearance, Guy made his way into the ballroom which was already pretty full. His first look was for Helen Treveryan, whom he saw a little higher up the room, standing by her father and surrounded by applicants. He was welcomed with a bright look of pleasure, and secured a waltz, No. 4.

‘Only one, Miss Treveryan,’ he said in a tone of disappointment; ‘can’t you give me another?’

‘I think you are very ungrateful, Mr. Langley. I kept that one for you, although you were so late, and I have made an enemy of Mr. Anderson for life.’

Colonel Treveryan was listening with a smile on his face. He had seen with pleasure the admiration which Helen had aroused among the men about him, and he felt generously inclined. ‘Give him one of mine, Nellie,’ he said. ‘It is selfish of me to keep two for myself.’ Guy looked as if he quite agreed, but Helen refused at once. ‘No; I won’t do anything of the kind,’ she answered. ‘I am not going to lose my best waltzes. No one dances as well as you do.’

The difficulty was compromised at last. Guy was to have an extra, if there were any extras, and a square.

It was a delightful dance. The floor was perfect, and the band was good, and there were many pretty dresses. Guy's first waltz was real bliss. He and Helen both had a good ear, and they had thoroughly caught each other's step. As they went smoothly round, steering through the crowd about them with an ease born of perfect sympathy and confidence, they were the handsomest and best matched pair in the room. Colonel Treveryan, a good dancer himself, watched them with pleasure; and the little Pink 'un gazed at them with envy.

Between that waltz and supper they sat out their square on the terrace. Helen had been dancing steadily and was glad of the rest. She was looking perfectly beautiful, Guy thought, as he led her out of the room; her eyes bright and her face a little flushed with the exercise. They found a seat overlooking the river, and sat down. 'Are you sure it is not too cold for you?' Guy said, as she took her hand from his arm, and his voice had a tender solicitude about it which might have betrayed him. But Helen was young and untrained, and she did not notice. 'Oh no,' she said. 'It is delightful to be out of the heat.'

It was very pleasant. Behind them, in the house, they could hear the quick music of the Lancers; but the terrace was broad and the sound was muffled. Twenty feet below them lay the river. The house

stood at the end of a curve; and looking to their left they could follow the line of the southern bank as far as the buildings of the town a mile away. The light from the illuminations was reflected in the water; and boats bearing torches were moving upon its surface. From these boats men were launching little lamps of various colours, which floated slowly down the stream into the darkness below the town. Many of these frail vessels disappeared before they had gone far, but many survived. Guy and Helen Treveryan watched them as they came on—a fairy fleet, forming and scattering and reforming in countless combinations upon the dimly seen surface of the river, as the air or the eddies drifted them. They floated slowly by and disappeared under the palms and bamboos which fringed the bank to the right. Across the river, to the north, was the blackness of the earth, and above it the northern stars.

Neither Guy nor Helen spoke much. She was conscious of nothing but a sense of exquisite happiness. To him, as he sat by her side, with her dress touching his hand, and her beautiful face and throat dimly seen in the starlight, there suddenly came an almost overpowering longing—the fiery reckless passion of a young man's love. His heart began to beat hard, and in another moment he would have been carried away, when she broke the spell. The Lancers were over, and there now came through the open doors the first notes of a waltz. Helen heard and got up at once.

‘You must take me in now, please. The next is my father’s dance. I must not be late for that.’ As they passed across the terrace she stopped again for an instant, and looked back towards the river. ‘How beautiful it is,’ she said with a slight tremor in her voice. And Guy answered fervently, ‘It is like heaven to me.’ Like heaven! A pretty girl, a starry sky over a silent Indian river, and a little dance music to set one’s heart going. Well, we have all had our moments of heaven on earth, and were they more poetically constituted? Later in the evening Guy tried to revive the dream, but when do such dreams revive? He got his extra waltz during supper, and after it he took Helen out to the terrace again; but her mood had apparently changed. She was talking about something that had amused her, and seemed in no humour to sit down again. Moreover, a surprise had been prepared for the guests, which soon brought the whole of them out to the back of the house.

If there is one thing which natives of India, high or low, love with all their souls, it is *âtish bâzi*—fireworks, or fire-play as they more accurately call it. They will spend any amount of money in this way, and seem never to have enough. Much against his judgment Hunter had agreed, in deference to the earnest desire of a great native landholder, who was heavily in debt, but very jealous of the Raja Sahib’s ball and very anxious to show his loyalty, that at twelve o’clock there should be a display of fireworks

upon a little sandy island which lay on the opposite side of the river, midway between the town and the *darbar* house, so that Europeans and natives alike might profit by the sight.

The display was announced by some explosions like fog-signals, and then began the usual thing. Rockets whizzed into the sky, singly or in bouquets, and broke in showers of gold and green and red; Catherine wheels whirled and hissed; squibs spouted; half-lit crosses and stars gleamed through the smoke, and half-extinguished blackening circles swung slowly round, and came to an inglorious end; two floating forts as big as hay waggons blazed into one another for some minutes with a tremendous noise of cannon and musketry at a distance of ten yards; an elephant and a horse of strange proportions arose outlined in fire; and finally there was a splendid trophy, consisting of an Imperial crown over the motto 'God bless the Queen-Empress of India.' The effect of this work of art was somewhat marred by the resolute refusal of the two n's to do their duty, which made ribald subalterns jeer, and by the powder smoke, which had drifted across the river and made the ladies cough; but it was very fine.

The giver of the entertainment had come to the *darbar* house, and it was necessary in common civility to put seats on the terrace and enjoy the show; but after a time it became a bore. The young men and

maidens murmured, and every one was tired of it. However, it was over at last, and the calm stars shone out again, looking rather contemptuous; and the Civil officers were very complimentary to the Thakur Sahib, who seemed pleased and went away smiling. The crowd said there had been a great *tamasha*, and that it had cost a lakh of rupees; and the dancing began again more vigorously than ever. It was nearly four o'clock before the ladies had all gone, and the young men sat down to the substantial second supper which some of them rued so bitterly later in the day.

CHAPTER XII

MR. PITT WRIGHT

AFTER the ball Syntia soon settled down into its wonted quiet. Most of the guests dispersed next day. They enjoyed a 'Europe morning,' and rose to a very late breakfast; and in the course of the afternoon they scattered in all directions, as they had come, by road and rail and river. Then the white tents, which had become yellow with ten days' dust, disappeared from among the mango trees; and the Civil officers went back to their regular grind again, and the soldiers to their parades and musketry; and there was peace in the land.

There was a sense of dreariness too at first, after all the racket of the past week, and the ladies looked rather fagged; but this passed off in a few days.

To Guy all seemed a delicious dream. There was no doubt about it now. Since the evening of the dance he had been hopelessly fascinated. Others had noticed his manner to Helen that night, if she had not; and he made little attempt to deny to his own heart that he had fallen at her feet. Yet, with

characteristic indolence and enjoyment of the present, Guy Langley did not even now seriously put before himself the idea of marriage. He was in love with Helen Treveryan, and he let his love have full course ; he did his utmost to be with her, and to make himself pleasant to her. But he said nothing to her that need change for good or evil the easy familiar footing upon which they stood to one another. Helen was still unconscious of his feelings. She had plenty of happiness in her life, and none of that vulgarity of mind which keeps so many young women always on the look-out for a 'follower.' So the matter stood, and so it might perhaps have remained for a considerable time longer if something had not come to disturb the even tenor of their lives.

Not long after the festivities of Christmas week there arrived at Syntia a young Englishman who was travelling in India, and had been passed on from headquarters with a letter of introduction to Colonel Treveryan. Mr. Pitt Wright was a man of about nine-and-twenty, with a fine place in the Eastern counties and an income vaguely spoken of as twenty thousand a year. He had lost his father when he was a boy, and had grown up without much home discipline. He was by no means a fool ; but he was proud of his money, and extremely careful in spending it ; and he had a conceited, supercilious manner, particularly with women, which was not agreeable. He contemplated entering upon a political career, and had

some ideas on the subject of India ; but at present he was travelling for pleasure and sport.

This unbidden guest settled down upon Colonel Treveryan's house as if it belonged to him. He had first fallen upon the ever-hospitable Viceroy, and had attached himself to the headquarters establishment with a calm tenacity which became first amusing and then infuriating. The aides-de-camp cursed him, and to all concerned he made himself an intolerable bore. He was sent away for a time to see the native capital of Jeypore, and the Taj, and the Golden Temple ; but he turned up again for the great assemblage at Delhi, and had to be accommodated with a tent in the camp. There he grumbled at everything provided for him, and added appreciably to the troubles of the staff, who were already worked off their legs. When the Delhi camp broke up he was at last shaken off, very much against his will. He had still to get rid of a fortnight or more before the beginning of the shooting-party in which he had been given a place, and as Syntia was in the midst of some of the recognised sights of India, and he had nowhere in particular to go, he consented with a not very good grace to pay a visit to the Commissioner.

He arrived by train one evening in January, and was met by Colonel Treveryan who drove him up from the station. He seemed to be in an indifferent humour ; complained in a hard level voice, very much at the back of his throat, of the filthy food which he

had got at the refreshment-rooms; and was strong against the shameful slowness of the trains, and the way in which the native porters clamoured for *bakshish* at every turn. Helen was out riding when he arrived, but they met soon afterwards at dinner. Mr. Pitt Wright did not make a favourable impression upon her. He talked rather cleverly, but he talked too much. He evidently considered himself of very much greater importance than his host, or the few people who had been asked to meet him. He interrupted and corrected without scruple, and his manner to Helen herself was familiar and patronising. More than once she felt tempted to object strongly to some of his remarks; but she restrained herself, and her father saw only that she was rather cool and distant.

When the ladies left the room, Colonel Treveryan walked round to the other end of the table where the stranger was sitting, and took his daughter's chair. Pitt Wright had pulled out his cigarette-case, and was lighting a cigarette from a candle in front of him. Having started this to his satisfaction, he sat back in his chair and began to talk again.

'How disgraceful the native carriages are on your Indian lines,' he said. 'I wonder the people stand it. Some one ought really to take the matter up. They are frightfully crowded, and the seats are nothing but narrow boards, and the whole thing is like a cattle pen.'

'Natives can travel by any class,' Colonel Treveryan

said. 'The third-class carriages are very crowded at times no doubt, but the people who travel third-class in India are not accustomed to sitting on cushions, and would vote them a nuisance, I fancy, in hot weather. It is difficult to see what one can do. The fares are very low indeed, a farthing a mile or less, and I suppose the Companies can't afford to give better accommodation for the money.'

'Ah! you are like the rest, my dear Colonel. You've got accustomed to it. Anything is good enough for a nigger. But I assure you the thing would not be allowed for a moment if the British public knew of it. You will have to treat them better one of these days.'

'I don't think they would tell you that I am inclined to treat them very badly,' Colonel Treveryan answered; and he repressed the feeling of irritation that his guest's words had stirred up. Were they not always the same, these ignorant globe-trotters, always ready to take for granted that their countrymen were brutal oppressors? What was the use of arguing about it? He carried off the conversation to other topics, trying to find out what were his guest's tastes and wishes and what could be done to amuse him. The result was not very encouraging.

Mr. Pitt Wright did not much care about going to see the old 'City of the Dead' in the forest, which was one of the sights near Syntia. It had once been a great Hindu capital, and there were ruined temples

and houses and tanks, all deserted now, tenanted only by bats and jackals, and overgrown by jungle trees. 'I have seen such quantities of these ruins,' he said, 'about Delhi. They are very picturesque no doubt, but they are very much alike. A little of them goes a long way.' Would he care to go down by boat to the great religious fair on the river-bank at Ramgunge? Pilgrims came to it from all parts of India, and one could see a great variety of types. 'Er, yes, I don't mind; I think that would be rather interesting; but don't they have cholera at these places?' Would he go and pay a visit to the Raja of Leree and see the famous rock fortress which had never been taken? No, he thought not. He had seen some of these hill forts already, and they really were rather a fraud. Then there was the position held by our people in the Mutiny, when the contingent revolted. Week after week a party of English officers and civilians and a company of British infantry, backed by a few faithful natives, had held a large enclosed house on the river-bank; the men fighting grandly against hopeless odds, and the poor ladies sharing the danger and privation, and doing their best to help by nursing the sick and wounded. The house was still there, all shattered and pitted with round shot and musketry, and the feeble earthworks round it had not yet wholly disappeared under the wash of the rains. It was a sight to fill any English heart with pity and pride. Surely no Englishman could turn carelessly away from

the spot where his countrymen had made that desperate stand. 'Thanks,' Pitt Wright said. 'I don't much care about battlefields. I don't profess to understand military matters; and after all, these little fights out here were not of much importance. Some day, if you happen to be driving round that way, you might show it me.' Finally Captain Lee, who was one of the party, arranged to show Pitt Wright a day's pig-sticking; and it was also settled that he would try a morning with the snipe in a neighbouring *jheel*. 'I have no doubt,' he remarked, 'that I shall make myself happy enough somehow, until the tiger-shooting begins.'

Then they joined the ladies. Helen had avoided asking a large party the first night in case her guest should be tired with his journey; but Mrs. Hunter was there, and Mrs. Stewart, and Mrs. Lee. Pitt Wright went and sat down near Mrs. Stewart, whom he had been looking at during dinner, and they were soon in an apparently friendly conversation.

After a time Hunter asked Helen to sing. She knew that Hunter and Stewart both liked it, and as none of the other ladies sang she went to the piano as usual. She turned over her music and took out a volume of German songs which Hunter always demanded. Then the beautiful voice rose clear and sweet and true, every word audible and every note easy and sure. And through it all, through the soft wail of Schubert's *Ave Maria*, and through Mendelssohn's

dreamy love-flight, *Auf Flugeln des Gesanges*, to the banks of the sacred stream, came at intervals the hard throaty tones of Pitt Wright, who was seated in a long low chair, with his head lying back and his legs stretched out, discoursing to Mrs. Stewart about the position of the Liberals in Norfolk. It was not her fault. She was fond of music herself and knew better. Her husband looked at her and shook his head, and she answered with an expressive shrug of the eyebrows. What are you to do when a man will talk whether you wish it or not? She returned him nothing but low monosyllables, and looked absently towards the piano; but it was no use. She had set him off, and if she was not more interested in his conversation than in the music he was. At the end of each song he stopped to say, 'Bravo, excellent,' and then went on talking.

When Helen had sung three or four songs in succession, she turned to Hunter, who had been sitting listening in calm enjoyment, qualified only by Pitt Wright's strident voice. A good dinner and then music was exactly his notion of happiness. 'Come along, Mr. Hunter, and join in a chorus. What shall we have? *Gaudeamus igitur?*'

Hunter sighed and got up. 'I am much too old to sing that, and it is pleasanter listening to you.' But he came nevertheless, and so did the Lees, and then Mrs. Stewart took advantage of a pause in Pitt Wright's remarks and offered to play for them, and they started the bright cynical student's song.

Mr. Pitt Wright declined to join of course. He did not sing. He lay out in his chair, with his head back and his hands in his pockets, and yawned unrestrainedly at intervals.

They had one or two more songs, and after that the party broke up. The men had put on their coats and lighted their cigars, and were standing on the steps waiting for the ladies, who were wrapping themselves up in a side room. Pitt Wright had risen, with an evident effort, to say good-night to them, and sank into his chair again as they walked out. Hunter turned to Treveryan and nodded his head sideways towards the drawing-room. 'You will find him an awful bore, Treveryan. How long is he going to stay?'

'Lord knows; but I daresay he is a very good fellow.'

'H'm. I daresay. I don't like the species myself. Come along, wife. We're keeping every one waiting.'

Treveryan waited until the last carriage had driven off, and then returned to the drawing-room. He found his guest in his former position: his legs stretched out, and the soles of his dress shoes facing the door. Helen was in the corner behind the piano gathering up her scattered music. As Treveryan came in, he heard Pitt Wright's voice talking of Mrs. Stewart. 'Not a bad-looking woman, and decently dressed too. Quite refreshing after what I have been going through of

late.' Helen did not answer, and he went on: 'Seen the last of them off, Colonel? Who were all these respectable people?' Then, without waiting for an answer, 'By the way, where did we say you were going to take me to-morrow?'

'I am afraid I shall not be able to get away to-morrow morning,' Treveryan said. 'I have some work; but I thought you might begin by driving over to cantonments and calling on the regiment. In the afternoon we could go for a ride if you liked, or to tennis at the Club.'

'Oh, very well. I have no doubt I shall get along all right. Now I think I will say good-night. No, no more smoke, thanks; I am rather tired.'

When Pitt Wright had gone, Treveryan changed his coat and went to his writing-room for a cigar. Soon afterwards Helen joined him. She had put on what she called her smoking-coat, a loose tea-gown of Tussa silk, soft and gray and comfortable, but well made, like everything she wore. Her father looked at her with loving admiration in his eyes. 'What a nice thing that is, Nell. I always think you look even better in that than in your swell dresses.'

Helen passed her fingers through his brown hair and then bent down and kissed it. 'Dear old daddy! you would think I looked nice in anything. Father, what are we to do with that horrid man? Do you think he will stay long?'

'I don't know, Nell. They said a few days, but

that may mean anything. I daresay we shall find him pleasant enough. We must not be inhospitable.'

'I don't want to be inhospitable, daddy; but it does irritate me so. They are all alike. They just use your house like a hotel, and they seem to think you have nothing in the world to do but to amuse them. I am not going to have you wasting your time upon him, and then sitting up half the night working to make up for it.'

'Don't, Nell; I don't like it. It is a nuisance, of course; but you must be civil to a man in your own house, and they don't understand. I daresay they think we are paid for it; and they have not the least idea what the work is in India.'

'I expect they understand well enough, but they don't care. So long as they get all they want, it does not matter to them what trouble it costs. One never realises how detestable Englishmen can be till one sees them travelling.'

'Nell, Nell, you really are not fair. Some of them are capital fellows. Who could have been nicer than young Wenley last year?'

'Yes. I liked him; but very few are like that.'

'Well, a good many of them do seem to leave their manners in the Suez Canal; but, after all, it is natural enough. They feel that they are in a strange country where nobody knows them, and so they don't much care what they do. I remember having that feeling myself when I first came out. You must settle down

into your place and get to know people round you before you care for their opinion.'

'I daresay, father; but I am certain you always behaved like a gentleman. They don't behave like gentlemen, many of them. There's no excuse for that.'

Colonel Treveryan put his hand on his daughter's: 'Never mind, Nell. Let's talk of something pleasanter than T. G's. How did Sultan go this evening?'

Helen shook off her little trouble with an effort, and the two were soon chatting happily about other matters.

By seven o'clock next morning Colonel Treveryan had finished his early tea and was at his work. Helen came out a couple of hours later, looking as fresh and bright as if she had never left England. She had not yet fallen into the bad Indian habit of early rising, which is responsible for more illness than anything else in the country.

She and her father sat down to breakfast, and finished it alone. A servant was sent to inquire whether their visitor would have anything in his room, but the answer was that he would come out soon. It was past eleven before he appeared, and Colonel Treveryan, after waiting some little time, had gone to his office. Helen had finished her morning interview with the servants, had taken some breakfast to Jacko the monkey and was looking after her birds, when Mr. Pitt Wright walked out of his

rooms into the hall. Her hands were full, but she smiled a bright good morning to him. She had reproached herself while she was dressing for her rather hasty condemnation of the night before, and had determined to make things as pleasant as she could. 'I hope you are rested,' she said. 'Did you sleep well?'

'No. I can't say I did. Some confounded dogs were howling all night and kept me awake.'

'I am very sorry. The pariah dogs do make a noise sometimes at night, and it worries one till one gets accustomed to it. You must have a quiet day. Now you must want your breakfast.'

She took him into the dining-room and poured out his tea for him, and sat with him while he ate his meal. He seemed to enjoy it, and talked agreeably enough, in a rather irritating free-and-easy way, until it was over. When he had done, he took out his cigarette-case. Helen got up. 'I will leave you to have your cigarette,' she said. 'My father said I was to tell you that you are to order the carriage when you want it; and if you want to speak to him about anything, I am to let him know.'

'Oh, don't go. What is your father doing?'

'He is in his office-room trying cases, I think. He is dreadfully hard-worked always.'

Mr. Pitt Wright was examining his cigarette, which had got a little flattened, and gently coaxing it into shape. 'Is he, really?' he said carelessly. 'I

thought he was a great swell, and had lots of fellows to devil for him. Look here, don't you go. I know you've nothing to do, anyhow. Come and talk to me while I have a smoke. You won't have one yourself ?'

He had remained seated when she rose, and his manner was very much the manner of our golden youth towards a barmaid. Helen's head went up, and her temper began to get the better of her; but she tried not to show it. 'I can't stop now,' she said, and walked out of the room. Her guest looked at her and laughed in a rather embarrassed way.

'Don't be cross. Please come back. I shall be miserable if you don't. It's very rude to leave me all alone.'

Helen returned to her birds, but the brightness had gone out of her face. She stood in the hall for a second, and a hot flush rose over her cheek and neck. 'If it were not for father,' she thought to herself, 'how I should love to have it out with him.' Then she pulled herself up. 'How silly I am to be troubled by it. I won't let him worry me any more. But he is not a gentleman.'

For the next week Helen succeeded in avoiding any unpleasantness, but Pitt Wright was a great nuisance. He had nothing on earth to do apparently and took no interest in anything, so that it was hard to amuse him. Colonel Treveryan took him out snipe - shooting one day, and he shot rather

well; but he disliked getting his feet wet, and came to the conclusion that snipe-shooting was not good enough. Then the hospitable Colonel, with a pang of regret, mounted him for a day's pig-sticking. He did not ride badly, but he got flurried and very nearly came to grief over a jinking boar, and then he laid the blame on Remus. The horse funked, he said, and put him off. Funked! Remus, who loved the sport, and would have carried his master straight at the biggest pair of tushes that ever gleamed. On other days Pitt Wright loafed about the house smoking, or drove over to cantonments. He had struck up an acquaintance with Denham, and would sometimes go and lunch or dine with him, ordering a horse or a carriage and keeping it out for any length of time without the smallest consideration for man or beast. Sometimes he went to the Club in the afternoon for a rubber, but not often; and as he did not play tennis he did not care to go in the evening, and Colonel Treveryan gave up playing. He would not call on any one in the Civil station; not even on the Lees, though Lee had taken a good deal of trouble in helping him to see some sport, and every one was ready to be hospitable. 'What is the use,' he said, 'of calling on a lot of people I shall never see again, and never want to?' Altogether Helen fairly longed to see the last of him. After the first day he was perhaps a little more careful in his manner towards

her, but it was always more familiar than she liked.

So things went on for three weeks, and Pitt Wright had shown no sign of going. Then one morning at breakfast came a letter to say that his shooting-party had been put off, and was not to begin until the 1st of February. 'Well, I'm hanged,' he said, reading his letter with a face of disgust. 'That is too bad. I have been waiting for those fellows a month already, and now I shall have to kick my heels for another fortnight, just because some silly old Colonel won't give some of them leave. It doesn't seem to occur to them that my time is limited. I must get away by the middle of February. I expect it will be beastly hot in the Red Sea even then. I shall write to the Viceroy's people and have them stirred up. Confound them!'

Helen sat looking at the table, with her mouth set. Colonel Treveryan answered quietly: 'It is disappointing, but I expect they can't help it, and you will have time enough. I daresay the shooting will be all the better for being a bit later. I wish we could find something for you to do meanwhile.'

Pitt Wright dimly recognised that he had not been very gracious. 'Oh, it isn't that,' he said; 'I am perfectly comfortable here, and I'm much obliged to you for putting me up. Only, I don't like staying for ever, you know.'

‘My dear fellow, please don’t think of that. We are very glad to keep you as long as you like to stay.’

So the unbidden guest remained at Syntia, hardly concealing his weariness and impatience to be gone.

CHAPTER XIII

THE DIE IS CAST

DURING all this time Guy Langley had seen much less of Helen, and he was concerned at the deprivation. It troubled him greatly when she failed to appear at the tennis-ground in the evenings. It troubled him still more to know that she was driving or riding with Pitt Wright, even though her father was with them. He would have been pleased if he had known how she disliked the duty; and he might have guessed it from her evident pleasure when at times she did break away; but a man in love is never reasonable. The net result was that he saw less of her, and knew she was constantly with some one else. It seemed odd to him that Pitt Wright should stay so long except for one reason. Guy was getting sore and jealous. It was not surprising. Helen controlled her dislike bravely, for her father's sake, and she said nothing to others against her guest. They seemed to be on the best of terms.

One Saturday night before dinner, when Guy walked into the anteroom of the mess rather early,

intending to spend a quarter of an hour in reading a magazine article which he had begun, he found Pitt Wright sitting near the fireplace. He had come to dine with Denham, who was also there. As Guy came in, the two were laughing, and he heard Denham say: 'You had better bolt before it is too late. She is a determined young woman.' The conversation was interrupted by Guy's entrance, and in a few minutes several other men came in; but during dinner Guy could not get those words out of his head. He spoke little, and ate less, and looked so glum that St. Orme, who was sitting next him, attacked him on the subject.

'What the devil is the matter with you?' St. Orme asked in his fine, slow, rolling voice, after several attempts had failed. 'You look as if you were going to be shot, or married, or something. By Jove, I believe that's it. *A ses beaux yeux!*' and he drained his glass.

Guy flushed guiltily, and Chimp's ringing 'Ha! ha!' by his side irritated him; but the words made him rouse himself, and for the rest of dinner he was less silent. Unfortunately the provocation soon recurred.

There was a very small party at mess that night, and Pitt Wright was the only stranger. When the cigar-box came round, several of those who had dined went off; some of them were going to drive out to camp for a day's shooting. Guy was listening to a story of St. Orme's about an adventure of his in Egypt. St. Orme had seen some odd things, and his

stories, told in his swaggering manner, were amusing enough. Suddenly Guy caught a few words which made him start. On the opposite side of the table, a few places from him, Denham and Pitt Wright were smoking cigarettes. Pitt Wright was sitting back in his chair with a self-satisfied smile, and Denham was leaning with his elbow on the table talking in a low voice. During a momentary pause, Guy heard him say : ' My dear fellow, any one can see the girl is hard hit. You have taken our one ewe lamb, like the beggar in the Bible.'

For the life of him Guy could not have helped listening to the answer. ' Well, she certainly is getting rather affectionate. I think it's about time I cleared out.' Denham laughed at the lie, a sneering contemptuous laugh, though the lie was of his own making. Guy's heart sank, and he felt as if he could have killed the man who was smiling opposite to him ; but what he had heard none the less smote him with a conviction of truth. He sat through the remainder of St. Orme's story with a dull pain gnawing at his heart ; and directly the story was ended he got up.

' Well, I'm off now,' he said ; ' I am not very fit to-night and must turn in early,' and he walked out into the air.

St. Orme looked after him curiously, and then yawned, twisted up his moustache, and strolled into the anteroom. He did not like Denham or Pitt Wright, and as he turned he looked over them with

an open insolent contempt which both saw and resented. They spoke evil of him when he was out of hearing, and he said to himself: 'Little cads, those two.' He would have preferred saying it aloud; but one cannot say all one thinks.

Guy walked across to his quarters and dropped into a long cane chair in the sitting-room which he shared with Dale. He felt a burning hatred for Pitt Wright, and some indignation against Helen herself. 'They are all alike,' he thought, as he called to mind how little he had seen her of late. 'She knows the brute's got money and chucks me over like an old glove.' It did not occur to his mind that she had never professed any love for him, and that he had never asked her for it.

Dale was absent. He had gone over to Mrs. Dangerfield's after dinner. She had asked them both, but Guy would not go when the time came. It was rather unlucky for Guy's peace of mind. He was in a humour when a longing for sympathy might have been too strong for his reserve; and, if he had spoken to his friend, Dale's breezy common sense and belief in him would have swept away the mist. As it was, Guy sat alone smoking and drinking whisky and soda-water, and brooding in silence, for an hour or more.

Nevertheless, as he sat, a feeling gradually came to him that after all he was perhaps distressing himself unnecessarily. Denham's assertion and Pitt Wright's reply might be quite untrue. The one might have

been more chaff than earnest, and the other merely the conceited boast of a flattered man. How often he had heard chaff of the kind before and attached no importance to it. His mind swayed this way and that in alternations of fear and hope, but gradually the hope became more definite. 'Anyhow, I will go over and settle it one way or another,' he said to himself at last. 'Anything is better than this.' Even then Guy did not put clearly before himself the idea of marriage. He was only filled with desire to know that Helen loved him. It would be enough for the present if he could make certain that Pitt Wright had been lying, and that he himself was dear to her. If he had been older, he might perhaps have been more cautious and have thought it all out more definitely before acting, but he was young and reckless. It did not occur to him that if he married Helen he would be throwing himself away, or that any one could think so. Few men are snobs at three-and-twenty. He did not entertain any exaggerated idea of his own value; and if he thought of his own people at all, he thought they had only to see her. But, in truth, he hardly thought of them yet. With all his indolence, perhaps because of it, his natural tendency was to act without troubling himself much beforehand as to the opinion of others. In a few words he was young and in love, and he was goaded by jealousy. Who stops to think it all out at his age? Have we not life before us, and strong hands and hot hearts?

Guy was happier when he had made up his mind. He straightened himself in his chair with a sigh of relief, and called for another 'peg' in a voice that was no longer despairing. Then he got into bed and fell asleep, dreaming of love and happiness.

In the small hours of the morning Dale arrived. He had walked home after a merry evening and supper. The servants were rolled up on the floor in the back verandah, fast asleep, and the lamp in the sitting-room had burnt itself out. Dale felt his way cautiously across to the door of his own room with his hands in front of him; but he stumbled over the wooden arm of Guy's long chair, upon which Guy had left his empty tumbler. This fell on the edge of the seat and broke, and Dale swore. The shiver of glass woke Guy up, and he heard Dale grope his way into the next room. A miserable sense of something being wrong came upon him, and looking into his memory he recalled Pitt Wright's words. The sudden remembrance made him groan and turn upon his bed in a torture of jealous wretchedness. Then his mind rapidly recaptured the line of thought which had comforted him before, and he felt better again. After that he began to tell himself that things always looked black at night, and that all would be brighter in the morning. The thought of the day, with its sunshine and action, soothed him, and he fell asleep. When he finally woke at eight o'clock, he did so with a beating heart and a sense of excitement; but the excitement was

not altogether unpleasing. His natural hopefulness had come to his rescue.

It was Dale's turn for church parade, which Guy was not sorry for; and he drove off alone after breakfast to the Civil station. The cold weather was lasting well and the air was still pleasant, but the sun was strong and the little church felt cool and refreshing. He was just in time, and as he took his seat he noticed with satisfaction that his enemy was not in the Commissioner's pew. Colonel Treveryan was sitting in it alone. 'I'm glad the brute isn't there,' Guy thought in a truly Christian spirit. Then it suddenly struck him that Helen might have stayed at home too, and he looked round at the gallery. No, she was there all right. He caught her eyes, and it made his heart jump. He turned round hastily, and did not see the blush that sprang to her face. Hunter saw it and smiled to himself.

The prayers seemed long that morning, and the sermon longer. At times Guy caught Helen's voice in the singing; it was his only pleasure during the service. At last it ended, and he was able to go outside and await her. When she came down from the gallery and saw him, there was something in his face which attracted her attention at once. It was a look of inquiry and eagerness which was unusual to him. He was embarrassed, and his embarrassment communicated itself to her. However, this was only momentary. They had hardly shaken hands when

they were joined by Colonel Treveryan, who had been talking to Mrs. Hunter. 'Good morning, Langley,' he said. 'Are you coming over to lunch?'

'I shall be very glad, if you will have me.'

'That's right. Is Dale coming too?'

'No, Colonel, he is on duty to-day.'

'Come along with us then, and tell your man to bring your trap round.'

Guy followed Helen into the Treveryans' carriage, which was open, and drove up with them. Helen was looking very bright and happy, with a warm colour in her face; and as he sat opposite, her dress touching him and her sweet eyes looking straight into his when she spoke, he wished the drive were ten miles long. When they got near the house Colonel Treveryan said: 'I am going on if you will excuse me. I want to see Oldham, and he was not in church. I shall be back in half an hour. Shall I bring him over to lunch, Nell?'

'Yes, do, father. Tell him it is my order. We have not seen him for a week.'

Guy and Helen got out of the carriage, and walked up the steps. At the top, between the pillars of the porch, they found Pitt Wright sitting in an easy chair smoking a cigarette. He had been reading some papers, which were lying about on the matting. He nodded slightly to Guy, and, without any attempt to rise from his chair, said to Helen: 'Well, did the little Pádre give you a good sermon?'

‘Yes, very good,’ she said, and was passing on into the hall when he lazily put out his hand over the arm of his chair as if to stop her.

‘Don’t go,’ he said in his throaty voice. ‘Come and sit down, and tell me all about it.’

Helen moved aside. ‘I must go and take my things off’ was all she said in answer; but the tone of her voice pleased Guy in the midst of his wrath. He would not trust himself to stay outside with Pitt Wright, and he followed her into the hall, passing straight through to the drawing-room as she disappeared into her own rooms to the right. He had not waited long when she came back. Something in her face and carriage emboldened him, and he said: ‘Let us go and sit in the south verandah. It is pleasanter there.’

She looked back through the hall to where Pitt Wright was sitting; then she turned and walked through the dining-room. As they came into the verandah Guy said to her, ‘How long is Mr. Pitt Wright going to stay?’

The answer was emphatic. ‘He is going to-morrow, thank goodness.’

‘Then you don’t like him?’

‘Like him!’ she said, with a flushing cheek and something very like a stamp of the little foot. ‘Like him! I detest him and his insolent ways. He would never dare to behave in England as he does out here. Oh, if only he were not in our house and I were not obliged to stand it!’

Guy's delight only gave the spur to his indignation. 'I am not obliged to stand it,' he said. 'Shall I take him in hand and give him a kicking? There is nothing I should like so much.' Guy was very young.

Helen was young too, but she was a woman. 'I wish some one would,' she could not help saying; then she laughed and pulled herself up. 'But you must not talk like that. I daresay he means no harm. It is only that I am not accustomed to be treated in that sort of way, and it makes me lose my temper. It is very silly of me.'

Guy was supremely happy in his position of confidant. 'Do hand him over to me,' he said; 'I have often longed to have it out with him on my own account. He's a horrid cad; and I don't think I should have stood him till now if he had not been your guest.'

Helen began to be embarrassed at Guy's earnest face and manner, and she felt rather ashamed of what she had said and let him say. 'No, no, Mr. Langley,' she answered, 'you must behave properly. I ought not to have spoken like that. Please don't think anything more about it, or it will make me very uncomfortable.'

Guy could not look into her eyes and restrain himself. 'I wish you would give me the right,' he began in a voice that was a caress.

With all her innocence Helen understood now, and she interrupted him hastily. She was not prepared

for this, and not quite in a humour for it. It startled her at the moment more than it pleased her. There were so many people about. The servants were walking in and out of the dining-room behind them; and everything was so public. It was a relief to her to see at this moment Goldney's dog-cart coming up the drive. 'Oh, there is Mr. Goldney,' she said, as if she had not heard; 'I suppose he is coming to lunch. I must go in.' Guy was only incited by the check. 'Stay one minute,' he said, but she walked on into the dining-room. As she did so he remembered that it was his only chance for the day. In the afternoon there would be the usual gathering for tea, and then church again. Guy was desperate. 'Miss Treveryan,' he said, as he walked in with her, 'I must speak to you. I shall come to-morrow.' Her only answer was a burning blush, which covered her cheeks and forehead and ears as she turned to meet her visitors. Guy could see it mantling into her bright brown hair at the nape of her neck. Goldney saw it too. He was a little surprised at the warmth of his welcome, but he was not deceived by it. It was a warmth born of embarrassment, as he guessed with a pang at his heart.

A few minutes later Colonel Treveryan arrived, bringing the judge with him, and then the luncheon gong sounded. During the meal Guy did not speak to Helen. Oldham and Pitt Wright sat next her, and she talked to the former. But there were only six of

them, and once or twice the talk became general. Once he met her eyes, and again she blushed crimson. He saw that it distressed her, and he refrained from speaking to her any more. Directly after lunch she left them. Guy could not resist stopping till tea-time, but it was useless ; and when the gathering began he ordered his dog-cart. She shook hands with him when he went, and their eyes met again. Guy knew then that she was not angry with him, but she had cut short his offer, and he knew no more.

As he drove home he felt disappointed, but he was not altogether unhappy. At all events, Helen did not care for Pitt Wright. That maddening doubt had been laid. Did she care for him ? She had not shown much sign of it, but he had hopes. It was clumsy of him to spring a mine upon her like that. Perhaps if he had had a quiet chance it would have been all right. At all events, he was now determined to know. The next day should decide.

CHAPTER XIV

SUSPENSE

DALE had spent a fairly cheerful day during Guy's absence. He had done his duty in the morning, and had then gone over and called upon his Colonel's wife and tried to play with Mabs, but Mabs had rather snubbed him. She had not much respect for Chimp. After that he had taken his cheery smile on to Mrs. Dangerfield's, and joined her lunch party. She asked him where Guy was.

'Gone over to church at the Civil station.'

'As usual. We shall have him reading the lessons soon. And on to lunch at the Treveryans', I suppose?'

'I expect so. He said he should stay if they asked him.'

'That girl is a nuisance. I wish she would take the little "Pink 'un" and leave you boys in peace.'

'She is a jolly girl all the same.'

'I daresay, but she is poaching, and I object.'

'I am afraid it's no use, Mrs. Dangerfield. Guy can be pretty obstinate when he chooses.'

‘Well, there are some more of you, that’s one comfort; only he was about the best. I am sorry he has taken to evil courses.’

Dale did not answer, and the subject dropped.

After a very merry lunch the party broke up. For a wonder Dale had been tempted to drink some champagne, a ruinous thing to do in India in the middle of the day, and he felt lazy and bored. He strolled over to his quarters and sat down in Guy’s long chair, with his little muscular legs up on the projecting arms.

His dog Jock came in from the compound, where he had been chasing a squirrel. Jock was a queer-looking beast. Dale had bought him as a puppy under the belief that he was going to be a fox-terrier; but long before he was full-grown it became clear that something had gone wrong. He was leggy, and his coat was rougher and thinner than a fox-terrier’s has any right to be. You could see the spots on the skin below. His manners, too, bore unmistakable mark of a plebeian origin. They were the manners of the immortal Crab; he never could be taught the least respect for capons or farthingales. At this moment Jock was covered with yellow dust, and Dale told him he was a dirty little devil, and tried to make him lie down on the floor, which he declined to do. He was a republican sort of dog, affectionate enough in his own way, but thoroughly disobedient. If he did not approve of your orders he trotted off quietly,

and went to stay with a friend until you were in a more reasonable frame of mind. Sometimes he would stay away a day or two.

For a few minutes Dale sat quiet, cogitating upon the nature of dogs in general and fox-terriers in particular. He still regarded Jock as a fox-terrier. 'Rummy little beggars,' he thought to himself, 'always chivvying something. Wonder why they can't leave squirrels and things alone.' Then it gradually dawned upon him that he was always chivvying something too. 'I'm blest if we're not rather like that ourselves. Small blame to us either. Life would not be much good if there were no sport to be got.'

Abstruse thought, however, was not Dale's line, and he looked round the room for something to amuse him. His eye fell on a small square table, upon which lay a pile of Guy's books. It was within reach, and he pulled it towards his chair, and turned over the volumes.

'Poetry books,' he said to himself, with a face of disgust. 'I can't make Guy out. He can shoot and ride and play polo and all that, so it's not as if he was an ass and fit for nothing else; and yet he will sit reading this rot by the hour together.' Chimp was not born under a rhyming planet.

He took up a copy of Wordsworth, and opened it at random, and turned over a page or two until he came to a passage Guy had marked. Chimp read it out aloud—

A violet by a mossy stone,
Half-hidden from the eye ;
Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky.

‘That *is* rather jolly,’ he said. He read the preceding verse, and then the last. The closing lines he repeated—

But she is in her grave, and O !
The difference to me !

‘Well, I suppose, that would make one feel a bit cheap, but I don’t see many points in it all the same—as poetry. There’s no go about it. Besides, any fool could say a thing like that.’ After this he looked at *Harry Gill*, but Wordsworth did not suit him. ‘Drivel,’ he said, as he put it down, and opened Shelley. The volume was scored in all directions by Guy’s pencil-marks, but to Chimp’s mind Guy’s admiration was not comprehensible. He looked at bits of *The Skylark*, and *The Cloud*, and other marked pieces.

The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow,
The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow.

‘Very pretty, I daresay. I don’t see the force of it myself. Milton,—oh, that’s the old bird who wrote the *Allegro*, that they made us learn at Bob Sayers’s before I went to Harrow. There it is, by Jove! How I hated it, and the other thing, *Pen-seroso* ;

that was worse. It's a beastly shame to make little beggars of ten or eleven learn those hard pieces, all full of Latin names and things, when they can't understand them. I believe that is what set me against poetry. I daresay I should have been no end fond of it if I had had a chance. I like really good poetry awfully now.'

But hark the cry is Astur, and see the ranks divide,
And the great Lord of Luna comes with his—something
—stride ;

Upon his ample shoulders clangs loud the fourfold shield,
And in his hand the mighty brand that none but he can
wield.

'That's the sort of thing. That makes you sit up.'

He looked for a copy of Macaulay, but it was not there. 'I know he has got it,' Chimp said ; 'I have heard him spout it by the yard.' He went back to Milton with a sigh, and made a heroic attempt to read some of *Paradise Lost*, but he could not. He found a marked passage in *Lycidas*—

Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise,
That last infirmity of noble mind,
To scorn delights and live laborious days.

'Oh, I daresay, old man. I think I see you scorning delights and living laborious days.'

Were it not better done as others use,
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair ?

'Beastly untidy of Neæra, but that's more his

form just now, poor old chap. It is a dangerous game. If he gets bowled over, won't old Lady Mary cut up rough neither? She's a jolly girl, but I don't expect she's got a bob; and he hasn't got too much. I wish I could give him some.'

Chimp remained in a brown study for a while, thinking of his friend, and his friend's home where he had spent a week the year before; then he returned to his poetry. He opened Coleridge, and skimmed through the *Ancient Mariner*, and then came upon the Vision of Kubla Khan. He read how Coleridge had composed the poem in his sleep, and how it had been driven out of his head by the man on business from Porlock. 'What a jolly lie,' Chimp said; 'I bet he got stumped, and did not know how to finish it. Don't wonder either.'

Then he tried Keats, but that was hopeless. The would-be classical pictures seemed to him eminently foolish, as indeed they were; and he did not care for the verse. He managed to read through *Lamia*. 'Beastly shame,' he said. 'Why couldn't the old beggar leave them alone? She was not doing any harm, and they were having a real good time. Awful hard luck on both of them.'

Chimp had reached the bottom of the pile now, and there he found an unpretending little volume in brown. 'May as well go right through,' he thought. 'Guy will laugh when I tell him I have read the whole lot. Gordon,—Scotchman, I suppose. All

about bonny lasses and wee bit bairns.' He opened the book and read a marked passage—

She rose when I hit her, I saw the stream glitter,
A wide scarlet nostril flashed close by my knee,
Between sky and water the Clown came and caught her,
The space that he cleared was a caution to see.

'By George, that's something like.' He read through the piece with keen enjoyment and then turned to the title-page again. 'Gordon,—Adam Lindsay Gordon. I remember now Guy asked me whether I had ever read it. That's a ripping piece.' He turned over the leaves and found a mine of wealth—the *Sick Stockrider*, the *Bushranger*, the *Ride from the Wreck*, *Britomarte*. Chimp was reading half-aloud now, reading with enjoyment and enthusiasm. It was a full hour before he put down that delightful book—unequal, even poor in parts, but so full of vigour and poetry.

At last he yawned and stretched himself: 'Done the whole jolly lot. Guy is having a real innings to-day. Stayed to tea, I suppose.'

It was getting on towards evening, and Spot, a puppy of Guy's which was tied up in the stables, was making a diabolical noise. It had slept at intervals during the afternoon, but was now broad awake and mad to get loose. Its occasional yelps had changed into an almost ceaseless paroxysm of shrieking. Close by it two *syces* slept unconcernedly, rolled up in their sheets, and one was quietly smoking.

He felt neither pity nor annoyance; and the other two were in no way disturbed. Natives of India do not seem to mind any noise when they are asleep. Those who are awake never think of moderating their voices on account of a sleeper. Dale was not so philosophic. The hoarse yells of the poor little wretch, as it tore at its rope and half-strangled itself, were more than he could stand; and, moreover, he thought he would go for a ride before dinner, by way of clearing his head. He strolled out towards the stables and ordered his horse, and let Spot loose. Jock had come up, and the puppy immediately began worrying him, hanging on to his ears and biting, till he turned upon it with a snarl. It looked surprised, and then stood barking at him, with its head down between its paws. But Jock hated the puppy, and would not play.

When Dale had looked at the horses he went into the house to change his clothes, and thought no more of the little beast, which had disappeared. It came into the sitting-room soon afterwards, carrying a very nasty bone which it dropped on the floor. The draught was stirring the hanging corner of a tablecloth, which looked bright and inviting. Guy was fond of pretty things, and had covered an old-fashioned round table at one side of the room with a piece of embroidered Delhi work. The puppy fixed his sharp little teeth in the hanging piece and worried it savagely, backing across the floor and shaking his

head. Before long a book was pulled to the edge of the table and fell on the matting with a slap, which startled the puppy and made him jump away with his tail down. His terror, however, was only momentary. He stood looking at the book for a second or two with his head on one side, and then came back and smelt it. Apparently the result was satisfactory, for his next move was to lie down on the floor and treat the book as a bone. He got his side teeth well home on a corner of it, and chewed off a bit of the cover, leaving a very ragged edge and some sharp tooth-marks beyond.

This was the condition of affairs when Dale came into the room. The puppy looked up, with the book between his fore-paws. Next moment he yelped piteously as he was held up by the skin of the neck. 'You mischievous little brute,' Dale said, administering punishment to the small hanging shivering body. 'I can't leave you for a minute without your being up to some devilry.' Yelp, yelp, yelp!

Then the sweeper was called and the culprit taken away whimpering, and Chimp picked up the book. It was a handsome edition of Tennyson's minor poems bound in red morocco with gold edges. 'By Jove, won't Guy swear!' he said; 'he is fond of that book, I know. What beasts puppies are.' After which he put the remains back on the table and went out to the doorstep. Everything was right there. The horse's coat was like satin, and his bit like

burnished silver. Dale was getting more and more particular about these things. He mounted and rode out of the gateway, and down the road towards the Civil station. On one side of the road was a bit of country which seemed promising for a paper-chase course, and he wanted to look at it.

As he rode a verse of Gordon's kept ringing in his ears, and he repeated it aloud with a twirl of his riding-crop—

But I clove his skull with a back stroke clean,
For the glory of God and of Gwendoline.

He had not gone far when he saw Guy in the distance. They pulled up and spoke to one another for a minute, and Dale offered to go back with him if he would come out too. 'No, thanks, Chimp,' he answered. 'I think I will have a quiet smoke before dinner.'

'Lazy beggar. Are you dining at mess?'

'Yes.'

'All right. So am I. I shan't be long.'

He rode off, thinking that Guy looked happier, and wondering whether Helen Treveryan had anything to do with it; but in a few minutes his thoughts turned to more serious matters. As he had guessed, it would do very well. There were some very pretty jumps, chiefly mud walis with ditches, which could be improved in parts; one or two artificial water channels, and some rolling ground, with thick timber in patches, and here and there impassable lines of wall and water.

Altogether a good, varied, broken country, not too open, but within the powers of any one who meant going and had a horse that could jump a bit. Chimp put his Waler over one or two mud walls with much satisfaction to himself, the good beast taking them freely even in cold blood. It is curious how kindly most horses will go at mud walls. Then they had a difference of opinion about a little ditch with some water in it, but Dale eventually persuaded the Waler that it was all right. When he got back to his quarters, he had worked off his lunch and was in good spirits.

So apparently was Guy, for when Dale went into his room, where he was dressing for dinner, Guy was whistling *John Peel*. It is true that he was rather abstracted, and did not appear to take much interest in the account of the paper-chase course; but he was cheerful. Suddenly his cheerfulness vanished. 'Confound it!' he said with fiery emphasis, stopping in the act of brushing his hair.

'What on earth's the matter?'

Guy hesitated, with a scowl on his face. 'Oh, nothing,' he said; 'only I had forgotten that infernal court-martial.' Poor fellow! he had been calculating that he could get away after stables and be at the Treveryans' by one o'clock. The disappointment was severe, and he went in to dinner as silent as the night before. Directly it was over he walked back to his quarters again; and there, after a short time, he was

joined by his faithful friend, who could not understand his sudden depression.

Dale found him sitting in his chair, without a book and looking very gloomy, one hand pressed deep into his pocket and the other holding a cigar.

'What *is* the matter, old man?' Dale inquired, seating himself and looking at him curiously. 'You're not seedy, are you?'

'Oh no. I'm all right.'

'You're *not* all right. I'm certain there is something bothering you. Nothing wrong about money?'

'Money? No. I'm all right—really.'

Dale looked at him rather sadly; and there came upon Guy a sudden longing for sympathy which he could not control. He sat up in his chair and paused for an instant, and then broke out: 'After all, I don't see why I should tell lies about it. Look here, Chimp, I know you won't talk. It's the old story. I have made a fool of myself; at least, I don't mean that; but—well, you know what I mean. I'm awfully hard hit, old chap, and I daresay you know who it is.'

There could not be much doubt, and Dale said at once, 'Miss Treveryan, I suppose.'

'Yes.'

'Have you said anything to her?'

'No; at least, not exactly.'

'Are you going to? She's an awfully nice girl, Guy; but do you mean that you're going to marry her?'

‘Yes, if she’ll have me. I can’t go on any longer like this. You don’t know what it is, Chimp. I thought she cared for that brute Pitt Wright, and it nearly drove me mad.’

Chimp made a sound expressive of unmitigated scorn. ‘Pitt Wright! What an ass you are! She wouldn’t touch him with the end of a barge-pole—not while you are there, anyhow. Well, I suppose you know best, old chap; but how will they take it at home?’

Guy moved uneasily in his chair, as a vision of Lady Mary came across him, but he answered stoutly, ‘I’m sure they would be delighted if they knew her; and anyhow, when I marry, I mean to choose for myself.’

‘Of course; quite right too. I only meant that sometimes one’s people get in a rise about one. Do you think there’s any tin?’

‘I don’t know, and I don’t care. I wish I knew whether she would have me.’

‘Have you? Of course she’ll have you. I’d bet my bottom dollar on that.’

‘Do you think so really? I believe I should shoot myself if she refused.’

Dale burst out laughing. ‘What rot, Guy! She won’t refuse, and you would not shoot yourself if she did.’

Guy was getting happier every minute. The secret was out, and Dale’s cheery confidence raised his spirits.

As to the future, let that take care of itself. Had he not a whole lifetime before him? Whatever came of it, he must hear those sweet lips say they loved him. All would come right somehow; it always did. They stayed talking over it for an hour, and as he talked Guy grew more and more enthusiastic. The slight undercurrent of doubt and warning in Dale's words and manner only spurred him on. Before they separated he had made up his mind.

'Well, good-night, old man,' Dale said at parting. 'Think it over well. It's a big jump to take. Good luck any way, whatever you do.'

'I *have* thought it over,' Guy said. 'Good-night.'

He went into his room and began to write to Helen. At first the words came glibly enough, but then there was a check, and he could not get it exactly right. Dale had been sleeping peacefully for a full hour, and Guy—it sounds unromantic—had been obliged to refresh himself with a long tumbler of whisky and soda before he was satisfied. Everything was silent as he read over his final copy of the letter which was to decide his fate. The weary bearer who brought him his 'peg' had put out the lights and rolled himself up in his sheet and gone to sleep again in the verandah. There was not a sound to be heard, except at intervals a horse moving sleepily in the stable, and the faint, distant barking of some village dogs. The house and all around it lay calm and still in the moonlight. Guy's letter was as follows:—

DEAR MISS TREVERYAN—I hoped to have been able to come over to-morrow, but I find I am on duty and cannot get away until the evening, when you said you had some people to tennis. I cannot wait another day on the chance of seeing you, and must therefore write. I think you know what I wanted to say to you. It is no use my saying much. If you can give me what alone I care to have—your love—you have given it to me already. If you have not given it to me, no protestations on my part would make you do so. Will you send me a few lines as soon as you can, and tell me whether I have had the wonderful good fortune to win what is more to me than all the world? I shall await your answer very anxiously. You have given me no right to speak to you as I have done; and you must not reproach yourself in the slightest degree for any pain that you may have to cause me now. Whatever comes, I shall always be glad that I have had the happiness to know you. Please forgive me for writing if I have troubled you by doing so. One line in answer will be enough. Only let it come soon.—Yours very sincerely,

GUY LANGLEY.

Please show this to Colonel Treveryan if you like; but let me have my answer from yourself, whatever it may be.

Guy lit a match and carefully burnt the scored and altered sheets which bore his first efforts. There were three of them, each beginning with a good, boldly-written sentence or two, and ending in a chaos of scribbles. He pressed the charred remains into powder in a waste-paper basket which he kept by his writing-table; then he went over his letter again. It read to him rather curt and broken up, and the words 'You have given me no right' worried him. He had got two 'givens' before. But he could not alter the sentence quite to his mind. 'I have no right' was not what he meant. He left the point open and

passed on to the ending. In his second attempt he had left out the 'Yours very sincerely,' which seemed to him a cool conclusion to such a letter, and, after rejecting some other forms, had written simply, 'let it come soon.—GUY LANGLEY.' When writing the final copy this struck him as rather theatrical and French, and he had put back the conventional words. Now he thought he had better leave them in. They accorded better with the tone of rather proud submission in which he flattered himself his letter was couched. Finally, he concluded to let the other sentence alone too. After all, it conveyed what he meant to convey; and the mere verbal inelegance, if noticed, would only show that he was not thinking too much of the manner of his communication. 'Let it be,' he thought to himself, 'till morning at all events. I can always alter it then.' He put the letter in an envelope, which he closed. An odd thought crossed his mind that if, by any chance, he died in the night he would like Helen to get the letter; and he addressed it carefully to 'Miss Treveryan, Syntia.' Then, with a sigh of relief, he undressed and got into bed, thinking how curious it was that he should be acting in such a calm and matter-of-fact way at the great crisis of his life. In a few minutes he was asleep.

When Guy woke in the morning he had to decide whether to send off his letter or not. He opened the envelope and read it again. It did not quite please him. He had a certain artistic sense of

finish, and he would have liked to alter it a little; but he shrank from the trouble and anxiety involved, and he had hardly time. After a few seconds of hesitation he put it in a fresh envelope, which he addressed to Helen. Then he called for a *syce*, and told him to take the letter to the Commissioner Sahib's and bring an answer.

When he was gone, Guy felt in thoroughly good spirits. The thing was done; and he believed in his heart that he knew what the answer would be. Throughout the day he did all he had to do smartly and attentively, without any apparent preoccupation, and though at times the remembrance of his letter flashed across him and made his heart thrill, he waited patiently enough, his strongest feeling being still a feeling of wonder at his own calmness. It was not until the afternoon that he began to be at all uneasy at the non-return of his messenger; and even then, though it surprised him a little, he accounted for it sensibly in a dozen different ways. He was even pleased at the reflection that, when the answer came, he would be free and able to think about it, instead of being in a room with a lot of other men and obliged to attend to what was going on.

CHAPTER XV

ENGAGED

WHEN Guy Langley left Colonel Treveryan's house there was only a short interval before evening church, and several of the party drove down together. Helen always went as she had to play the harmonium, and Hunter went to support her.

That evening's service was one never to be forgotten. As she drove down she was still feeling very restless and upset; but when she got to her seat she made a resolute effort to control herself. As she knelt with her face in her hands, praying, with a woman's ready self-reproach, that her thoughts might be kept from wandering, a sense of stillness and peace came upon her. She accepted it thankfully as an answer to her prayer, and rose with quiet happiness in her heart. Guy's name had not passed her lips. Not even upon her knees could she confess as yet the love of which she had hardly recognised the existence. All she asked now was that she might be made less unfit for the worship in which she was engaged—as if love were a sin. After that, with

the help of the music, she had no difficulty in keeping her thoughts upon the service, and even upon the little Pádre's sermon. Then came the evening hymn. She sang it with a full heart, the sweet *Abide with Me* that has brought comfort to so many, putting the seal upon the day of rest and driving away for a few hours the last relics of the fret and striving of the week. There were some quiet good-nights in the church-porch, and then Helen drove back through the darkness.

The evening dragged. Helen felt as if so much had happened to her, and so long ago. She wanted to get away and think it all over quietly; and Pitt Wright's voice and conversation jarred on her more than ever. He had somehow found an opening for one of his favourite arguments, and was engaged in demonstrating with much satisfaction to himself that patriotism was only a form of selfishness. He thought his hearers did not understand him, and was very urgent in his explanations. As a matter of fact, both of them understood him perfectly well; but they were bored by the foolish old conceit, the truth and falsehood of which they had long before realised. Helen was always impatient of this class of reasoning. She felt that, whether it was selfishness or not, a man who was without a strong love of country was never worth much. When Pitt Wright went on to scoff at our insular conceit, and to say that in many respects we were inferior to our neigh-

bours, and that sooner or later we should of course fall to our proper level, as others had done, she fairly lost her temper. 'If those are our feelings we deserve to fall,' she said hotly. 'We should certainly never have been what we are if Englishmen had always thought as you do.'

Colonel Treveryan looked at her and abruptly changed the conversation, and she was silent. Then she began thinking of Guy Langley again, and of what he had said to her. She could not help contrasting him with Pitt Wright. How different he was, with his straight eyes and courteous manners and gallant bearing. This man had not a spark of soldierly feeling in him. You could not imagine him risking his life for anything in the world.

When ten o'clock struck, Helen suggested that it was time for her father to have his cigar. Pitt Wright wished to smoke too, so she said good-night and went to her room. She had been debating in her own mind whether she ought to tell her father what Guy had said. She shrank from doing so, for, after all, he had said very little, and might say no more; and she had not thought it all out yet. It was a relief to put off saying anything.

When she had dismissed her *ayah*, Helen sat down in a low chair and gave herself up to her thoughts. Now that she could look quietly back upon what had passed, she felt that, if she had allowed him, Guy would certainly have asked her

to be his wife. She remembered, with a thrill at her heart which made her colour hotly even now, the eager look in his eyes. Yes, she could not be mistaken; he did care for her. The discovery had startled her at first; it rejoiced her now. Then she put it to herself: Did she really care for him in return? The answer was not long in coming. He seemed to her everything that a soldier should be—manly and gentle and courteous, and withal so bright and handsome. Whatever the men about him could do he could do, and do well; and not one of them had his deep feeling, his love for all that was good and beautiful, his taste for poetry and music and art, his faith in her God. She deceived herself, of course, to some extent. She did not realise how a quick sympathetic nature can catch, and reflect for a time, the most beautiful feelings of others. Nevertheless, it was not surprising that she thought highly of him, and that, with her romantic girlish heart, she should have imagined herself unworthy of so perfect a knight. ‘What is there in me,’ she thought, ‘that he should care for me?’ She sat long pondering over it all—a motherless girl who had to work out her life problem alone; and when she rose from her chair, her way had become plain to her. Since the morning, when she had risen as innocent and thoughtless as a child, love had laid his finger on her heart, the scales had fallen from her eyes, and the woman

in her had suddenly leapt into life. She was innocent still, with the marvellous snow-white innocence of a pure-hearted girl; but she could never again be a child. As she rose, trembling at the new-born feeling within her, and yet rejoicing, it came to her with a sudden pang that perhaps after all Guy would never speak again as he had done; but this time she drove away the thought. She knew now that she loved him, and she would not doubt. Already she felt as if doubt were disloyalty to him.

When Helen Treveryan laid her head on her pillow and fell asleep, Guy Langley was finishing his letter to her; and at the same time her father's guest, on the other side of the house, got into bed, leaving a closed envelope on his writing-table. It was addressed to Mrs. Pitt Wright, Mereham Hall, Norfolk, and contained the following letter:—

SYNTIA, INDIA,
28th January 1876.

MY DEAR MOTHER—I don't suppose you have the vaguest idea where Syntia is. I never heard of it till I came here. I know it well enough now, worse luck, having been condemned for my sins to spend a whole month in the wretched place waiting for my shooting-party to get ready. They have taken their time about it, but I join them to-morrow, and hope to get some tigers. I shall come home by a steamer that leaves Bombay about the middle of February, and shall not be sorry to get back to civilisation, though I am rather glad I saw the Delhi business and the Taj, etc. I suppose you got my letter telling you all about it.

I don't know why on earth I was sent here. It's the

slowest hole you can imagine—nothing to do but snipe-shooting or pig-sticking. They wanted me to go and see some ruins in the jungle and other ‘sights,’ but I have had enough of that sort of thing, and politely declined. I have been staying with some people of the name of Treveryan. The father is what they call a Commissioner. He is regarded as a great man out here, and gets absurdly high pay—three or four thousand a year, I believe. He is not a bad fellow in his way, and has done me well enough; but out here people are only too glad to put you up as long as you like to stay. They don’t get a chance very often of seeing any one. It’s about time I went now, though. The old boy has got a rather pretty daughter, and he leaves us alone a good deal. I’m obliged to be civil to her while I am staying in the house, so she’s got me in a corner. However, I have defended myself successfully so far, and I am off to-morrow, so I think I am safe. If I don’t write again, you can expect me about the middle of March. I shall stay a day or two in town, and then come on to Mereham.—Yours ever,

H. PITT WRIGHT.

After breakfast next morning, Pitt Wright gave over this letter to Helen Treveryan, asking her to have it posted; and then he shook hands with her and looked into her honest eyes, and said good-bye, and added, ‘Thank you for a very pleasant visit. I hope some day we may meet again in England,’ and was gone. And the native servants, who had hung about in expectation of a tip, hiding themselves from their master’s eye, saw the rich English gentleman upon whom they had waited for a month depart with all his boxes, leaving never a rupee behind him to comfort their souls. The poor sweeper and water-

carrier, who were accustomed to neglect, only gazed at him wistfully from outside the verandah, and turned away to their labours with a sigh; but Mohun, the head bearer, looked scornful; and Maula Baksh, the Mahometan table servant, who had been specially obsequious and attentive, said to his fellow Daulat Khan, while his black moustache quivered with indignation, 'What sort of a custom is this? This is not a *Sahib*.' But what was the use of giving them anything? He would never be there again.

Helen Treveryan stood on the steps with Rex to see the carriage go off, Colonel Treveryan driving his guest down to the station. As they drove away, she re-entered the house with a hearty expression of relief.

It was a trying morning. She felt sure that Guy Langley would come over, but she did not expect him before one o'clock, as he would have 'stables' after parade. She had therefore some hours before her. She made a resolute effort to think of other things, and for a time she was able to find occupation in her household work. This, however, did not last very long; and by eleven o'clock she was beginning to feel very restless and unsettled, and to wonder why her father had not returned. She took out some breakfast to Jacko the monkey, who lived on the top of a pole by the front door, and she paid a visit to the stables and gave the horses some bits of sugar-cane, and then went into her room and stood for a time at her window, thinking with a beating heart of what was coming upon

her. As she looked out upon the dry grass sward, a little gray squirrel ran across from the clump of casuarina trees and jumped on to her verandah. The tiny creature attracted her attention, and roused her from her day dream. She looked at it for a time as it ran about in little jerks, with its nose on the ground and its tail in the air, and then she thought she would go to her piano and do some practising. She was on the point of turning away when she saw a man walking up the avenue of mango trees from the western gateway. Something told her that his coming was of importance to her, and she watched him as he advanced towards the house, walking easily as if in no way pressed. He wore no livery, but she could see from his dress, as he passed in and out of the tree-trunks, that he was a *syce*, and when he came close to her she recognised Guy Langley's servant. He passed by the corner of the house, going towards the front door, and as he did so, Helen dropped into a chair and covered her face with her hands. Her heart stopped for a second, and then throbbed heavily once or twice, and she felt the blood rush to her face. She had barely time to control herself when she heard the bearer's voice calling to her at the door of her outer room.

‘Miss Sahib?’

‘Yes. What is it?’

‘A letter.’

She walked to the curtained door, behind which the man was standing, and put her hand out. It seemed to

her that he must guess her secret if he saw her face, and even her voice sounded as if it must betray her. She need not have been troubled. Her correspondence was large, and Mohun regarded the letter as an invitation, or an answer to an invitation. He asked whether the man was to wait for a reply, and Helen said she would see, and went back into her bedroom. There she opened her letter with trembling hands and read what Guy had written. For a minute or two afterwards she sat with the letter in her lap, and her heart beating wildly; then she read it again, and thought it the most beautiful letter that ever was written, proud and tender and manly, just what she would have expected from him. She felt as if she had had it a long time, as if it had come many hours ago and become quite familiar to her. One lives fast at the supreme moments of life.

Helen's next feeling was one of impatience for the return of her father. Until he came she could do nothing. In the meantime she went out and told Mohun to keep the *syce* waiting; she would send an answer after she had spoken to the Commissioner Sahib. She could face Mohun boldly now. There was still a tumult at her heart; but in place of restlessness and fear there were rising in it pride and joy, and a sense of power. She knew well enough now what her answer would be.

Colonel Treveryan did not keep her waiting long. Ten minutes more and she heard the trot of his horses in the distance, and saw him drive up, a cigar in his

mouth, wholly unconscious of the crisis. He had taken advantage of the break in his morning's work to drive round and see Hunter about some business-matter which he wanted to settle. Now he would have gone straight into his office, where some native officials were awaiting him, but Helen came out and caught him as he got down. 'Can you spare me a minute, father?' she said. 'I want to speak to you.'

The tone of her voice struck him, and he looked up at her with some curiosity as she stood on the steps above him. 'All right, Nell. Fire away.'

'Would you mind coming into my room?'

He walked up the steps and put his hat on the stand and followed her, wondering vaguely whether anything was wrong. When he was safe in her room she handed him Guy's letter. 'This came while you were out, father.'

Colonel Treveryan read the letter in silence, and then it went slowly down, and he looked at her. She was standing in front of him with her eyes fixed upon his face. They dropped, and her cheek flushed. 'Look at me, Nell,' he said gently, and he put his hand on her shoulder. Helen looked up, and a pang came to her heart. She had never realised until now what it would be to him. Now she realised it suddenly as she saw the look of sad inquiry in his eyes. The doubt faded out of them without a word being spoken, but the sadness deepened. Poor fellow! she was all he had now, and he had got to love her very dearly.

The blow had fallen quite unexpectedly too ; and just at first he could not help feeling sore and miserable. His home must be desolate again, and she who had seemed to care for him so much was ready to leave him for a boy whom she had never seen until a few months before. It was hard. After a second or two he said, ‘Why did you not tell me before, Nell?’

‘I did not know, father. He said nothing until yesterday, and then . . . it was only just a word or two. I meant to speak to you last night, but I had no chance ; and . . . I was not sure.’

‘I wish you had told me. You have not answered yet?’

‘No, father.’

‘You want to answer now, I suppose ; and to give him what he asks for?’

Helen felt depressed ; but she remembered Guy’s letter and answered gently : ‘I have given it already, father dear.’

Colonel Treveryan sighed—a long sad sigh. ‘Very well. Ask him to come over and see me to-morrow morning. He could come to breakfast, I daresay.’ Then he stooped and kissed her, and turned away sharply, his lips quivering.

Helen could not let him go like this. A wave of contrition and sorrow came over her, and she felt for the moment as if she could give up even Guy for his sake. She laid her hand on his arm and stopped him.

‘Don’t be angry with me, daddy. I really did not know. Tell me what you want me to do.’

Her father turned and drew her towards him until the bright brown head was against his breast. He kissed her hair and stroked it, trying to control his voice. ‘Forgive me, Nell,’ he said at last, ‘I’m a selfish beast; but I do want you to be happy.’

Helen caught one of his hands and held it. ‘You do like him, father?’

‘Yes, I like him very much indeed. I think he is the finest young fellow I know, and I ought to be ashamed of myself. It was only that I could not stand the thought of losing you.’

‘You will never lose me, father dear. I shall always be just the same to you.’

Colonel Treveryan smiled and kissed her head again very gently. He knew too well. ‘Now, Nell, I must go and get to my work. Don’t let yourself be bothered by anything I said. I am really very glad indeed; and I shall soon get accustomed to the idea. I must have been blind not to have seen it before, but somehow it never struck me.’

He went away, like the simple-hearted gentleman that he was, trying hard to look cheerful and to rejoice for his daughter’s sake. He did not worry himself at the moment about any secondary considerations. In India these things are looked at from a more old-fashioned point of view than in England. Guy Langley was a gentleman, and ‘in the service’—that

was sufficient. Treveryan was soon hard at work in his office, forcing himself to devote his whole attention to a rather complicated revenue case, and to forget all about his private affairs.

Meanwhile, Helen sat down in the quiet of her own room to answer Guy's letter. Her heart was full of joy and pride, and though she found it unusually difficult to say what she meant, the task was a pleasant one. She was helped by the feeling that Guy would be waiting impatiently for her answer. She wrote a few lines only—

DEAR MR. LANGLEY—Your letter has made me very happy. My father wishes me to ask you whether you can come over and see him to-morrow morning. If possible come to breakfast.—
Yours very sincerely,
HELEN.

She hesitated before signing it, and then wrote simply 'Helen.' 'He will like to feel that I am not Miss Treveryan to him any longer,' she said to herself. It was a delightful act of surrender.

Helen addressed the letter carefully and sealed it with the Treveryan crest, lest the *syce* should open and read it: *syces* who do not know a word of English being so likely to do these things.

Mohun took the precious missive out as callously as if it had been a mere invitation to dinner, and handed it over to the man who was waiting for it. He added that it was urgent, and that the messenger must run with it; but this was a formula which meant

absolutely nothing, as Sew Ratan well knew. He had never received a letter without it from the lordly Mohun, who loved giving orders to his inferiors. He accordingly twisted the note into a fold of his turban and walked off in a very leisurely manner, past the window at which Helen was standing, and down the avenue of mango trees. She thought he went very slowly, but if she had seen his proceedings after he got out of her father's grounds, her slight impatience would have given place to a warmer feeling. At the corner of the road near the Commissioner Sahib's gateway was a spreading banyan tree, and under the tree a seller of sweetmeats had had his stall from time immemorial. It was not a bad corner, for there were cross-roads at this point, one of which led to the district *cutcheries* or courts, and was largely used. Sew Ratan came into the shade of the tree and bargained for a minute or two with the sweet-seller, who sat on a little wooden platform in the middle of his baskets. Finally a bargain was struck, and Sew Ratan became the possessor of a pound or so of some sticky compound that looked like whitish barley-sugar twisted into bracelets. He received his purchase in a large green leaf, and after a desultory conversation strolled off down the dusty road, eating the bracelets and yodelling softly to himself. At the entrance to the cantonments, which he duly reached about an hour later, there was a house in which one of his friends was employed. Feeling rather thirsty from the effects

of his walk in the sun and his pound of sweets, he went round to the stables and got his friend to give him some water. After that the two sat down on their heels under a tree close to the stable and smoked a pipe together, putting the tobacco at the end of a long upright stem, and sucking at the coconut bowl with that cussedness which characterises the Oriental. When he had spent another hour in this pleasant manner, Sew Ratan rose with a sigh and proceeded on his journey, at the end of which he eventually delivered himself of his letter. By that time one of its corners was broken, and it bore a very dirty thumb-mark, which would have made Helen miserable if she had seen it. She wrote a pretty hand, clear and legible with some character in it, like Aunt Madge, and was rather proud of the neatness of her letters.

Guy's bearer had gone to his dinner, which included a quiet afternoon's sleep upon a string-bed in his hut, and he was not going to get up for any of the Sahib's ridiculous letters; besides which, the Sahib was away at court-martial. So Helen's loving little note was put down upon the wooden stool outside the great man's hut, and there it remained until the sun was sloping westward. Then it was taken over to the house and placed upon the sitting-room table.

After lunch she sat in her room trying to read, until it was time to change her dress. There were a number of people coming to tennis. In the evening it was better. The tennis helped to pass the time, and

then her father and she went out to dinner at the Hunters', and there were other things to think of. But all the time the secret was lying in her heart; how strange it seemed that no one of them knew.

CHAPTER XVI

GUY WRITES HOME

WHEN Guy at last got his letter it was evening. The court-martial had lasted an unusually long time. Directly he was free he mounted his pony which had been waiting for him for some hours, and went over to his quarters at a gallop. 'Langley seems to be in the devil's own hurry,' St. Orme remarked, as he disappeared round the corner, leaving a trail of dust behind him.

The moment he was in the house he saw his letter on the table. 'When did this come?' he said, with an affectation of indifference, as he took it up.

'It has just come, Sahib. The Commissioner Sahib was out, and the *syce* had to wait until evening.'

Guy went into his room to read his letter. Dale was out apparently, but he might come in at any moment.

Guy looked at the seal as he turned the envelope over to open it, and noticed what a perfect impression it was. His first feeling was almost one of disappointment at the extreme shortness of the letter; but as he

read it over and realised all that it meant his heart bounded within him. Then he was seized with a furious impatience to see Helen. It was hard to be so near, and yet unable to get to her. Should he ride over and try to see her now? He looked at his watch. No, it was hopeless. There would be a dozen people at tennis, and he would have to come back early, as he was dining with the Aylmers. Besides, he had no right to go. She had asked him to come in the morning, and it might embarrass her if he came earlier. He must possess his soul in patience. Then it occurred to him that he could write, and he sat down at once. That would be relief, and it would be delicious to feel that she had his letter before night. This time he let himself go. She had accepted his love, and let him know that he had won hers. What need for further restraint?

MY DARLING—Your letter has just reached me, and I must send you one line of thanks for it. You cannot know what mad delight it has given me. I had been trying all day to harden my heart for the answer which I feared would come; and I hope that if it had come I should have taken it like a gentleman, but when I saw your letter all my courage was gone, and for a moment I could not open it. Now that I have done so the joy is almost more than I can bear. I must not weary you by writing any more, but you will forgive me for writing this much? I cannot let the night pass without telling you what happiness you have given me, and I cannot tell you except by letter. It does seem cruel that I should be obliged to stay away from you when I could be with you in a few minutes; but you are right of course, and your wish is law to me. It

always will be. I shall ride over early to-morrow morning and hope to see you for one minute before breakfast. Don't disappoint me if you can help it. Till then, good-bye. I feel as if I could not stop writing. Why cannot I go to you instead of these cold words?—Ever your own
GUY.

This letter took some time to write, and the darkness had closed in before Guy entrusted it to his servant, with orders that it must be delivered the same evening, and that there was no answer.

When Helen received it, which she did on return from her dinner-party, Guy's words did not strike her as being by any means 'cold,' but she was far from resenting their warmth. It seemed to her strange and delightful that she should have aroused such fiery devoted love. She locked up the two letters together when she went to join her father over his cigar. If he had asked to see the second, she would of course have shown it to him, but she felt no inclination to do so. Already there was that between her and Guy which was not for other eyes. Colonel Treveryan did not ask to see the letter; but after a time he put his hand out and laid it on Helen's. 'Did you write to Langley?' he said.

'Yes, father. He is coming to-morrow morning to breakfast.'

There was silence for a time, and then Colonel Treveryan ventured one more question. It all seemed to him so sudden and unexpected that he could not quite get over a feeling of doubt even now. Girls

were apt to imagine themselves in love with the first man who admired them. 'Forgive me, Nell,' he said, in a hesitating tone; 'you know how much your happiness is to me. Are you quite sure you really care for him?'

There was no hesitation about her answer. 'Quite sure, father dear.' Her voice was low, but it was level and steady.

'You have not known him long, Nell.' Helen was silent, and he went on: 'Two or three months is a very short time, and you have not seen much of one another.'

Helen leant her head against his shoulder with a mute caress. 'I am quite sure, daddy.'

Colonel Treveryan gave in. He remembered his own marriage. He had not known his wife three months when they were engaged, and they had been very happy. The time had not seemed short to him then; and, in truth, three months at a small Indian station, where people are thrown together almost daily, as much as on board ship, may mean a fairly close acquaintance. 'Very well, I won't say any more. You ought to know best, and he is a very fine fellow. I don't wonder at your liking him.'

Of course Helen read over his letters again before she got into bed. Was it possible that she had received them both since the morning? It seemed as if the day had been a month long. Her prayers that night were an outpouring of thankfulness and love. For the first time Guy's name was mentioned in

them. It was never omitted again so long as he lived.

Next morning Helen was up early. She used to go down to the church sometimes before breakfast to practice, and the church was on the road to the cantonment by which Guy must ride in. She felt sure that if he saw her carriage at the door he would come to her, and she knew they would be alone. It was an innocent plot, which she would not have been ashamed to confess, and it succeeded as it deserved to do. Riding past the church at a slow walk, half an hour before the earliest time at which he could present himself at Colonel Treveryan's, Guy heard the sound of music and saw the brougham near the porch. He turned into the church enclosure and asked the coachman whether Helen was inside. The answer was as he expected; and handing over his horse to a *syce* he walked up the narrow stone stair to the gallery. Helen heard his step, and rose to her feet; and there, while the last note of the broken music still lingered in the echoing roof, he saw her standing, her sweet eyes turned towards him, and her sweet face flushing to the temples.

There for the first time he kissed her lips. It was a solemn betrothal, but she never felt that there was any unfitness in it. She was plighting her faith to the man she loved. What better place than the quiet empty church, where they would be alone but for the presence of the God who had been so good to

her? And Guy cared not a straw whether he was in a church or anywhere else so long as he held her in his arms.

They drove up to the house together, one of the *syces* bringing up Guy's horse, and shortly after their arrival Colonel Treveryan appeared. His manner was quiet but friendly, and that breakfast was a pleasant one to two at least of the three. When it was over, Colonel Treveryan carried Guy off. 'Come along,' he said with a smile, laying his hand on the young man's arm, 'we must talk this business over seriously. You have not done with me yet.' They went away to Colonel Treveryan's smoking-room and sat down. Guy would not smoke. Colonel Treveryan's cigar took some time to light, and while it was getting ready he was thinking how he should begin. He had spent a very sleepless night pondering over it all. Life with a cavalry regiment was an expensive thing, and he knew little about Guy's circumstances. His own means were not large, and he could not do much to help. All this must be cleared up, though it was doubtless all right.

At last the cigar had caught evenly all round and was fairly started. 'Well, Langley,' Colonel Treveryan said, 'my daughter showed me your letter, and I understand that she has given you the answer you wanted.'

'Yes, sir.' Guy went on with a hesitation and an earnestness which became him well: 'I hope, sir,

that you do not disapprove. I know I am not worthy of her—no one could be; but if I do not make her happy it will not be for want of trying. I do care for her, sir, from the bottom of my heart.'

His eyes seemed trustworthy. 'I am sure you do,' Colonel Treveryan answered; 'and apparently she does not think you unworthy of her. It has taken me by surprise, and it is rather a wrench to me; but I daresay I shall get accustomed to it in time, and so far as you are concerned, I can only say that as I must lose her I know no one I would rather have in your place.'

'Thank you, sir. Of course I can understand what you feel about it.'

Colonel Treveryan sighed. 'Can you? Perhaps you can. Well, now about business. When do you want to rob me of my daughter?'

'Whenever you will let her go, sir; the sooner the better.'

'That is plain speaking. But—you must excuse my asking these questions; I am her father, you know,—how do you stand? Are you in a position to marry at once?'

Guy was conscious of an uneasy feeling, but he drove it away and replied confidently enough: 'I am not well off, sir, but I think we could manage. I have four hundred a year beside my pay, and I dare-say my father would do something more for us.'

Colonel Treveryan did not look convinced. 'Four hundred a year is not very much to marry upon in a cavalry regiment,' he said, 'unless things have altered since my time; and I am afraid I cannot do very much to help. I could give my daughter three or four hundred a year now, but in case anything happened to me she would have very little.'

'I don't care in the least about that, sir,' Guy said warmly.

'No, but I do. You see it is a question of her comfort and happiness. I want to feel sure that she will be provided for whatever happens. Is the money your own?'

It was a little cruel, and Guy felt hurt. 'Two hundred pounds is my own. My father allows me the other two.'

'Then if anything happened to him you might find yourself with only two hundred a year altogether?'

'I suppose he would leave me something.'

'Suppose he did not, or suppose that he objected to your marrying?' The idea had not occurred to Colonel Treveryan before, but his anxiety for his daughter's welfare had quickened his apprehension.

'I am sure he would not do that, sir,' Guy answered confidently. 'My father and mother have always been very fond of me, and I am sure they would do anything for me.' Nevertheless, as he spoke there rose before him a vision of his mother's face,

hardening against anything she disapproved ; and his voice faltered a little.

Colonel Treveryan looked grave. ‘You must not think me mercenary, Langley. So long as Helen is happy, I don’t care in the least about money ; but I am older than you are, and I want to make sure that there is just enough. I have seen very pitiable things happen for want of it.’

‘Yes, of course, sir, I quite see that. Shall I write to my father and find out exactly how things stand ?’

‘I think you had better, and meanwhile let us say nothing about this business. I don’t want to be disagreeable. We will manage somehow if Helen and you remain of the same mind. Only let us clear the ground first, and have no chance of misunderstanding. It will be time enough to give out your engagement when everything is settled. Don’t you agree with me ?’

Guy felt keenly disappointed. He had never contemplated this ; though he had certainly not thought of money when he wrote to Helen, yet there had been a latent assurance in his mind that no money difficulties would intervene. She was an only child, and Colonel Treveryan was in a high position and seemed to be well off. Still he could not but acquiesce in the justice of Colonel Treveryan’s views. ‘I suppose you are right, sir,’ he answered dejectedly. ‘I will write at once. I hope I may see Miss Treveryan meanwhile.’

‘Oh yes. I don’t want to be hard upon you,’ Colonel Treveryan answered, touched by Guy’s face; ‘only you will be careful, won’t you, for her sake? Don’t let people have a chance of talking until all is settled. Now go and see her, and then write your letter. The mail goes out to-morrow.’

Guy got up, and Colonel Treveryan walked with him to the door. ‘Good-bye, Langley,’ he said, as he shook hands with him. ‘Don’t be down-hearted. We’ll pull through somehow. It’s only a delay of a few weeks, and you can come over as usual meanwhile until we go into camp.’ Nevertheless, when Guy had gone out, he shook his head doubtfully. ‘I ought to have thought of it all before I let Helen answer his letter, and he ought to have thought of it all before he wrote to her. What a boy it is, after all!’

Guy found Helen in the drawing-room, and with some hesitation and many apologies he told her how matters stood. It was horrible to him, he said, having to speak to her about money. It would, in fact, have been very much pleasanter to avoid such troublesome subjects, and give himself up to the unmixed enjoyment of his dream. It was a disappointment to her too. She had never thought of any obstacles arising. Being a woman, she would have liked to let her happiness be known; and to her frank and rather proud nature anything that savoured of concealment was humiliating. It certainly was a disappointment. However, she took it bravely. She laughed at his

rather sentimental regrets and protestations. Was it not enough for her that he should sit holding her hand and gazing at her with his beautiful sad eyes, and passionately wishing that he could shield her from every breath of trouble, from the very knowledge that there was such a thing as money? What more could a woman want? 'No, no,' she said, though the incense was sweet to her; 'I am not made of sugar and spice, and all that's nice. I can be quite horrid sometimes; and I am not going to be treated as if I were too delicate to take my share of whatever comes. You will find me dreadfully hard and practical.'

He felt a little chilled, a little dissatisfied with her. She did not seem to appreciate the poetry of his love, the desire to set her up and worship her and keep her apart from all worldly things, like a goddess. He never thought that she was repressing and hardening herself, and trying to be cheery and sensible for his sake, when she would have dearly loved to give rein for a little to the romance of her nature. 'After all,' she said, 'what does it matter? You will get an answer to your letter in six weeks, and we shall be away in camp most of the time. It will pass very quickly.'

Guy thought this cold, and was hurt; but she would not let herself admit that they had any cause of complaint.

At last she began to feel that he was unjust to her. 'Do you think I do not feel it?' she said. 'It

is just as hard to me as it can be to you. I hate the idea of keeping it all a secret, and so far as I am concerned I don't care one atom whether you are rich or poor. If you had not a farthing in the world, do you suppose it would make any difference to me ?'

He knew it would not, and he thought she looked more beautiful than ever as her face grew serious and her gray eyes flashed with something like contempt at the thought. Yet when they parted he rode away feeling depressed, and she saw him from her window and knew that it was so. He took his horse down the road between the mango trees at a walk, instead of cantering along the grass at the side as he used to do, and his seat and figure were significant. When he had gone Helen turned away and sat down in her easy chair, and then her head went forward on her hands, and she burst into tears. Already !

That night after dinner Guy told Dale all about it. He knew so much that it would have been difficult to tell him no more, and Guy could trust him. Dale's remarks were few. 'I'm awfully glad for you, old chap,' he said. As to the engagement, he thought Colonel Treveryan quite right. 'That's sound enough. You can't expect him to let the thing go on until you've squared your people and know where you stand. But you say there will be no trouble about that.'

Guy looked uneasy. He did not say much more,

but he asked Dale to promise that he would not talk about it.

‘All right. I will keep it dark,’ was the answer. ‘You know me.’

Before he went to bed that night Guy wrote his home letters. It was an awkward thing to do. Facing his mother quietly in the silence of the night, he felt convinced that she would receive the news with anything but pleasure. She knew nothing of Helen, and she would not like his marrying in India. Moreover, he knew she had formed other views for him. Not many years before a family of the name of Schneider had bought a house near Wrentham and settled down. The father, a quiet old German stock-broker whom none knew, had died soon afterwards, leaving a widow and one daughter. Then it transpired that little Clara Schneider, with her fair hair and colourless eyes, was, or would be, a very rich woman. Before long the Schneiders had become very intimate at Wrentham, and when Guy was at home on his farewell visit his mother had shown him very clearly that nothing would please her better than his taking a fancy to the heiress. Guy had laughed it off at the time, but he reflected now that Lady Mary was a determined woman. Then again it was not pleasant having to ask his father about money. It was especially disagreeable asking what he might expect to have at his father’s death. However, the thing must be done, and Guy sat down to write soon after dinner.

At midnight he was writing still, but soon after that he laid down his pen with a sigh. His letters, after all, were short enough.

DEAREST MOTHER—I have been very bad about writing lately, but there has been a good deal going on in one way or another, and I have been rather busy. Now I find it very difficult to say what I want to say, but I know I can be sure of your love and sympathy in everything that comes to me; and just now I am very happy. I have met my fate. You remember my writing once or twice before about the Treverys? Lately I have got to know Miss Treveryan very well, and I feel that she is everything that a woman can be. This morning I have seen her, and she has promised to be my wife. I am afraid you may think I have been hasty in this, but I really have not. It is three months now since I came here, and in that time we have seen a great deal of each other. I have got to know her thoroughly well, both in her own house and in society; and I am certain that she is exactly what you would like your daughter to be. I wish you knew her; but as you do not, you will trust my good taste? Helen is tall and graceful, with the truest eyes in the world, and an absolutely bewitching manner. I never saw anything like it. Every one here thinks her quite perfect. Naturally I quite agree, though she says she is not. Her father is a fine old gentleman, and was in the Thirty-First Hussars years ago. He did splendid service in the Mutiny, and is a great man out here—Commissioner of a Division, which means a sort of governor. Do write me a few lines by return, and wish me good luck. We are of course saying nothing about our engagement until you have heard of it and approved, but I am longing to let it be known. Don't, please, think I have been wrong in not telling you before. I had not said a word to Helen until last Sunday, and then the whole thing came upon me suddenly. Of course I had thought about it a great deal, but till then I did not think she cared for me, and it was no good talking about

it. Good-bye now, dear mother. I think it will be the happiest day of my life when you and Helen meet each other. Meanwhile, believe me ever your loving son

GUY.

P.S.—I am writing to my father about the business side of it.

MY DEAR FATHER—You will have seen, or will see, my letter to my mother, and I need not repeat what I have said in it. I hope you will approve what I have done. I am writing to you now to ask you very kindly to let me know how I stand about money matters. Colonel Treveryan wishes to know this before he agrees to our marriage, and I have promised to write to you. I told him that at present you allowed me £200 a year, and he remarked that this might not be permanent. I hate entering upon the subject, and for my own sake I would never do so; but as he wishes for exact information, would you mind helping me in any way you can? Colonel Treveryan says he can allow Helen three or four hundred a year while he lives, but that, in case of his death, she would have very little. I hope by that time I shall be a field-officer at least.—Believe me ever your affectionate son

GUY LANGLEY.

Guy read over these letters carefully, and did not feel satisfied with them; but he did not know how to improve them, and they went out unaltered.

The next few weeks were not altogether a happy time, either for him or Helen. A few days after Guy's proposal Colonel Treveryan went into camp, taking Helen with him. He had to make a tour of inspection through a part of the country where ladies could travel, and he felt that it was better she should not be left in Syntia. Helen and Guy were therefore separated from each other. Moreover, the departure of the

Treveryans was not enough to prevent some idea of the secret leaking out. Colonel Treveryan's servants had formed their own conclusions with regard to Lâli Sahib, as they called him, and from this cause or some other it soon became known to Guy that the thing was in the air. Dale, when questioned by the ladies, replied steadily that he knew for a fact that Guy and Helen were not engaged; and Guy himself tried to deceive his friends by casual references to the Treveryans, but it would not do. He felt that Helen and he were suspects, and Helen felt it too. Altogether, the position was trying.

There was, however, for both of them the consolation of the post. Wherever the Commissioner Sahib might go his mail followed him closely. The horsemen who cantered along the soft country roads to the cluster of white tents under the trees carried in their locked canvas bags many a letter from Guy to Helen. She used to sit and answer them in her tent, while the soft breeze played through the open doorways, and the little bronze-green fly-catchers glittered in the sunlit air outside, and the kingfishers hung quivering over the blue waterpools. Guy's letters were the more cleverly written—full of untrained poetry and passion, and touching enough at times in their youthful chivalrous enthusiasm. Hers were quieter and shorter; indeed, he felt and complained at times that they seemed curt and cold; but they were very sweet letters nevertheless. She wondered at his power of words,

and humbly apologised for her own want of it; but now and then, in her simple language, without exaggeration and without effort, she wrote some little perfect womanly thing which brought the tears to his eyes, and made him conscious of his own inferiority. 'My darling,' he once answered her, 'never say again that your letters are not worth having, or that you wish you could write like me. Your letters are far better than mine. They are to mine what a violet is to a passion flower. It is not, I hope, that my love is less true than yours. I do not believe that. But all your thoughts are so exquisitely pure and good that your words cannot help being beautiful. The thought shines through them. If ever other eyes should see our letters, which God forbid, it will not be yours that suffer by the comparison.'

And he was right. He was beginning to learn the lesson which is vouchsafed to so many of us. There was being revealed to him a purity of spirit, a tenderness of perception and feeling, of which he had never before imagined the possibility. He was gazing into the wonderful depths of a woman's heart.

CHAPTER XVII

THE NEWS ARRIVES AT WRENTHAM

It was a fine spring morning when Guy's letters reached Wrentham. The winter was past; the rain was over and gone; the flowers appeared on the earth, and the time of the singing of birds was come. There were some crocuses and violets in the garden, and the golden burnished stars of the celandine were beginning to glitter in the hedgerows. One or two primroses had been seen. Evelyn had found a blackbird's nest in a thorn bush as yet uncovered by leaves; and in the home wood the rooks were very busy indeed. Below them, in the little corner where a woodcock sometimes lay, the daffodils were fluttering and dancing in the breeze. The air was cold, but clear and sunny. Life was stirring in it.

The postman generally arrived at the hall during breakfast, and as it was the day for the Indian mail, the Langleys were on the lookout for a letter from Guy. Old Pantling, the butler, knew Guy's hand very well, and his decorous manner was a trifle more interested than usual as he brought the post in to Lady

Mary. 'Dear me,' she said, as she looked through it, 'we are in luck to-day. There are two from Guy. I wonder what makes him write to us both.'

There was a letter for Barbara from some one else, but both the girls turned to their mother to hear the news from India. Pantling cut some wafery slices from the ham on the sideboard, and deliberately offered them to each member of the family in succession. He was rewarded by seeing Lady Mary lay down her letter with a face like a thundercloud, and by hearing his master, who had also opened his, give vent to a smothered whistle. The girls looked up inquiringly, and Evelyn said, 'What is the news, mamma? Is anything the matter?' Then the discreet Pantling saw that he was not wanted, and went away.

Charles Langley finished his letter, and looked at his wife with a face of doubt which rapidly changed to one of dismay. 'We must talk this over after breakfast,' Lady Mary said sternly, in answer to his look, and then she turned to the girls. 'Guy is quite well, but he has got into a foolish scrape; nothing serious.'

The girls saw that for the present they were not meant to know more, and they asked no questions. Lady Mary read her other letters, and spoke about them to her husband as if nothing had happened. Then Charles Langley walked off as usual, Lady Mary saying she would come to his study in a few minutes.

After she had given some orders to the house-

keeper, which she did in a perfectly calm and level manner, though not very pleasantly, she walked into her husband's room. He was leaning with his back against the mantelpiece, and one heel hooked over the fender, but as she entered he stood to attention, and moved to one side of the chair which he had put near the fire for her. She came up to him with a very hard-set face, and remained standing. 'This is a nice business,' she said, with a tinge of contempt in her voice.

'Yes; what on earth are we to do?'

'Of course it must be stopped at once. I thought Guy had more sense.'

'Yes, young ass; but how are we to manage it?'

Lady Mary was inclined even then to resent any depreciation of Guy, and she answered rather sharply and inconsequently: 'He writes to you about money matters, and of course you must tell him plainly that you won't allow it. I don't suppose it is his fault. They have taken him in somehow.'

Charles Langley looked rather helpless. 'I will write of course, but . . . aren't you going to write too? I really don't quite know what to say. You see, he is his own master after all. Supposing he were to insist on taking his own line?'

'Nonsense, Charles. He is a great deal too sensible, if the thing is put plainly to him. Just write and tell him that you cannot approve of the marriage. Say that you are giving him already as much as you can afford, and that, under the circum-

stances, he must see how impossible it would be for him to marry. It is easy enough. I will write a few lines too, and make it quite clear that the thing must be given up. I hope you see now who was right about his exchanging from his regiment.'

After a few words more Lady Mary went off to her own room and sat down to write. Before she began she thought the matter over quietly, and, considering all things, her letter was judicious enough. She did not expect any serious resistance on Guy's part. She was unused to opposition, and did not doubt that in this matter, as in other matters, she would get her own way. She was able, therefore, to keep her temper under control. As to the expediency and propriety of stopping the marriage, she never hesitated for a moment. Such a thing would be Guy's ruin. Altogether, she faced the question in a resolute but temperate frame of mind. It was annoying of course; but boys would be boys, and, after all, a little firmness would put an end to it all. There was no need to write harshly. It would hurt poor Guy, and make matters harder for him. The best way would be to appeal to his affection and common sense. Before lunch-time the letter was ready.

MY DEAREST GUY—We received this morning your letters of the —th February, and I don't think you will be surprised to learn that they have caused us much distress. You are quite right in feeling sure of my love and sympathy, for you would always have that under any circumstances; but, my own boy,

how can I tell you I approve of what you have done? I do not wish to say a word against Miss Treveryan, who is no doubt everything you think her; but you know that as it is you have not more than enough to live upon in your regiment. How are you to support a wife and family as well? Your father can allow you no more than he does already, as he will tell you. Where is the money to come from? You say Colonel Treveryan might allow his daughter something; but, even supposing he did so, this is only a temporary help. In case of his death or your father's, you would be in dreadful difficulties. I feel certain that, if you will think it over quietly, you will see that such a marriage is impossible. I daresay you thought we could afford to do more for you, but indeed we cannot. We are not rich, and we have very heavy expenses. Don't think me unkind, my boy. If I believed that this marriage could be for your happiness, far from hindering it, I would do everything in my power to bring it about. Knowing as I do that it could only end in misery, I am obliged, even at the risk of your thinking me hard and cruel, to tell you that I can never consent to it. Do take leave and come home to us for a few months. How I wish you had never gone to that dreadful country; but it is too late to think of that. Come back to us now, for a time at all events, if you will not exchange to a regiment in England, as I asked you to do before. When you have seen me, you will understand it all quite clearly. Go straight to Colonel Aylmer, and say it is very important for you to go at once, and that you must do so. In the meantime I need not say that I feel for you most deeply, for I know too well how painful such a thing must be to you; but there is no help for it, and I am sure you will be brave and sensible.—Ever your loving MOTHER.

Charles Langley's letter was shorter. He had tried to remember and reproduce his wife's words.

MY DEAR GUY—I have received your letter, and I am sorry to say I cannot answer it as you would like. I am not

able to approve your engagement. I already allow you as much as I can afford to do, and in the circumstances you must see how impossible it would be for you to marry. I am afraid you will be disappointed, but I don't know what else to say.—I remain your affectionate father

CHARLES LANGLEY.

‘That is exactly what she said,’ he thought, when he had read it over; ‘but it doesn’t read very well, and I don’t see that it tells him what he wants to know. I wonder what the girl is like.’ And there came over him a serious doubt whether they were acting altogether kindly and wisely in cutting the matter short without further inquiry. Guy would have at least ten thousand pounds at his death, and he had five or six now, and evidently she would have something. At a pinch too they could be helped. If she was a nice girl, and the boy really wanted to marry her, it might not be such a bad thing after all. Every one cannot be a millionaire, and in the service one can live pretty cheap if one chooses.

Lady Mary had no such doubts. She felt that she was acting solely in Guy’s interests, and that for his good it was her duty to deny him this thing, just as she used to deny him some little indulgence in his childhood. It never occurred to her that she might be wrong. She was never wrong. Her mission in life was to keep others right.

Lady Mary was a loving mother, with a very high idea of Guy’s value. He was a boy of whom any mother might have been proud, and to her eyes his

price was above rubies. She overestimated his talents, and his good looks, and all belonging to him. Moreover, she firmly believed in her heart that all connected with herself were in some way a peculiar people. Though her grandfather was merely a successful lawyer, and her husband's ancestors were country squires descended from a successful tradesman, she had persuaded herself that she was a person of very blue blood indeed, and that the Langleys of Wrentham were something altogether out of the common. She had the pride of birth in its commonest English form. Naturally she thought it would be a terrible *més-alliance* for Guy to marry in India. She knew nothing of Helen Treveryan; and she rightly attached no importance at all to Guy's brief description of his lady-love. If she had given herself the trouble to analyse her own idea, she would have found that she pictured the girl to herself as a young person of questionable parentage, with bold black eyes and a shady character and vulgar manners, whom it would be impossible to present to her friends. She had been brought up, as most Englishwomen are brought up, to know nothing whatever of India. In her time she had seen an Indian crisis or two, when the British public had been suddenly fired with an intense interest in the country, and society had seized upon and made lions of any Indian officers who happened to be in the way—probably the wrong men. Then the excitement subsided, and well-bred England forgot India again as

completely as if that wonderful empire had no existence. If Lady Mary thought of it at all, she thought of it as an unhealthy and immoral place, where some depraved white men loafed about in straw hats, beating Hindus and making them smoke opium; and where the women were no better than they should be. An Indian marriage was a thing that Guy must be rescued from at all costs.

Lady Mary's ignorance of India was but an example of the ignorance of Englishmen in general about the Colonial Empire. It is not wonderful that our colonies grow restive at times. It is rather wonderful that there is any loyalty left among them. Even now, though some men of mark have been able to look beyond party interests, and have tried to rouse the nation to a sense of its greatness and its responsibility, how many Englishmen in the old country know anything, or wish to know anything, of the vast England beyond the seas? With India perhaps a spirit of indifference does comparatively little harm. We are safe enough there. India is not a colony but a possession, and Englishmen in India must always remain Englishmen. They will always of necessity continue to fight for the English flag, though at times they may fight with sore hearts. Perhaps it is the better for them that they should work on in obscurity, far from the applause of their countrymen, cheered only by the sense of duty done. Even in India, however, there is one danger. Our own people will never be goaded

into disloyalty. They are only a few thousands in number, and they are constantly recruited from England; but if we teach or permit the three hundred millions of Indians about them to look upon them with disrespect, if we weaken their hands and encourage all who oppose them, then sooner or later we shall have again to fight for empire. Remember the Mutiny, when your churches were full of black-robed sorrowing women, and realise in time that you cannot with impunity permit India to get out of control. The way to do so is to regard your countrymen in India as aliens, and to take for granted that they are always in the wrong. They are not aliens: they are your own kith and kin; and what they are doing you would do if you were in their place. They are English men and women, who have walked on board an English steamer at Dover or the London docks, and are in no way different from yourselves, except that they have seen something more than England and have learnt to face danger and responsibility.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE BEGINNING OF TROUBLE

GUY received his answer one hot evening towards the end of March. He had stayed at home, waiting for the English mail, instead of going to the Club; and was sitting in his long chair trying to read when his servant came in with the letters. Guy took them from him, and saw that they were what he was expecting. There was one from his father, and one from his mother.

He began with his mother's, and as he read it his heart sank. His first feeling was one of conviction and self-contempt. Why had he been such a fool as to rush into this impossible thing and make them despise him? He opened his father's letter, and a smile came into his eyes. He knew the history of that letter almost as well as if he had been present when Lady Mary sketched it out.

Then he read both letters again carefully, and as he did so a change of feeling came over him. After all, he had not been so very unreasonable, and their objections were at least open to argument. No doubt,

if he married Helen they would not be rich, but so long as his father and Colonel Treveryan lived they would not be so very badly off; and Charles Langley had said nothing about what would happen after his death. Probably he would leave something to all his children. Altogether, though of course he was not surprised that his mother should be unwilling to see him marry a girl without money, yet it was what men did every day, and there was no other objection to his engagement. As he worked it out his depression gave way to resentment. They might have helped him if they had chosen.

Then a vision of poor Clara Schneider came before him, with her plain face and light eyelashes. 'I'm hanged if I'll do that anyhow,' he said to himself.

It was very hard and very embarrassing. Things would come right yet somehow; but he knew of old how terribly resolute his mother could be, and in any case, for the present at all events, he must confess to the Treveryans that he had met with a distinct refusal. It would not be an agreeable task. Guy did not admit to himself that he had the slightest thought of giving Helen up; on the other hand, he did not at once set aside Lady Mary's decision as regrettable but immaterial. He was fond of his mother, and accustomed to look up to her. He was not weak enough to submit without resistance; but he was not vehement enough, not old enough perhaps, to see his way clearly at once. His mind was full of trouble and doubt. No help was to be got from Dale.

He had gone away for a couple of days' quail-shooting, and his room was empty.

The next day was Thursday, a holiday, and after a restless night Guy mounted his horse to go over to the Civil Station. The mornings were still pleasant, and as Guy rode on through the cool fresh air he felt his spirits rising. They sank again when he reached the Treveryans' door, and realised that he had to break his news.

Colonel Treveryan had just returned from an early ride, to see a new bridge which was being built by the Public Works Department. He was sitting in the south verandah, still booted and spurred, smoking a long cheroot, and reading the official letters which had come by the morning *dāk*. A pile of them lay on the table with his helmet and hunting crop. He sent out a *salaam*, and Guy came to him through the dining-room.

'Well, Langley,' he said cheerily, as he got up and shook hands, 'what is the news?'

Guy hesitated. 'Not very good, I'm afraid, sir.'

Colonel Treveryan looked grave. 'Have you heard from your people?'

'Yes. They—I am sorry to say they are not very encouraging. In fact—I think perhaps you had better read what they say. I have got the letters here,' and he took them out of his pocket and held them out.

Colonel Treveryan read them slowly through and put them down on the table. After a moment's

silence he looked up at Guy: 'You should have thought of all this before you said anything to us.'

'I wish I had, sir, but I had no idea there would be any objection. I am awfully cut up about it.'

Colonel Treveryan's soft heart was touched at once, and he answered not unkindly; but Helen's happiness was concerned, and his manner still conveyed disapproval. Guy was seized with an ardent desire to clear himself from any suspicion of weakness or fickleness, and he broke into earnest assurances. Nothing he said could ever make him change, and he felt certain his mother would come round in time. It was only a question of time. The warmth of his professions was increased by the silence of his hearer. Colonel Treveryan listened quietly, and was inclined to believe him; but he could not help feeling that Guy's assertions were rather vehement than steady. There was a ring of doubt and trouble running through them. It was not a tone of confident self-reliance. 'The boy means well,' he thought. 'I hope he really has good stuff in him. I hope Nellie has not made a mistake.' To Guy he said at last, 'Well, Langley, I don't quite know what I ought to do at present. I must see Helen and speak to you again.'

'I hope I may see her too, sir.'

'Yes, if you wish it. Perhaps it will be just as well. You had better stay to breakfast and see her afterwards, and come over again to-morrow when we have thought it all out.'

Guy accepted the invitation, and he sat down in the drawing-room to wait for Helen while Colonel Treveryan was dressing. She had seen Guy ride up, and had got ready as quickly as she could. Guy had not been five minutes alone before she came in, as he had first seen her come, by the side door from her own rooms. This time, though she looked to him more beautiful than ever, he met her with an air of embarrassment which she perceived at once; and as she sat down the smile died out of her face. Then he began his confession.

Poor fellow, it was hard work. He had known that it would bring her unhappiness; but he had relied upon her love and sympathy and strength, and had not thought of her pride. It was wounded at once by his first hesitating words: 'I have heard from my mother. I am afraid I ought to have written to her before. She objects altogether.'

'Objects?'

'Yes; she says it is impossible. Of course,' he went on slowly, 'it makes no difference to me—you know that?'

Helen sat silent, her hands clasped in her lap. In her heart was rising a fiery indignation, mingled with a sense of intense disappointment. At best it was all at an end again, for the present at least, and there must be another long period of waiting and concealment. Why should Guy's mother have the power to 'object' to her? Why should he stand it? As Guy

spoke on she too caught the note of doubt and inquiry in his voice, and it vexed her. She loved him and told him so; but he got little help from her. She was hurt and humiliated; and, moreover, what could she say to him? If his heart did not tell him what to do, was it for her to tell him? Altogether the interview was a sad one. It ended in silence and constraint, and in a sense of injury on Guy's part. Before it was over the daily hot wind had risen and was moaning dismally round the house, filling the air with dust and veiling the sky.

When Colonel Treveryan came in the three of them went to breakfast, and for the sake of appearances they tried to talk as usual; but the meal was short and uncomfortable. Directly it was over Guy asked for his horse, and rode off. It was a dreary dusty ride, and Guy was disheartened and sore. Everything seemed to have gone wrong at once. Surely it was hard that he should be blamed, as he felt he was blamed. He had done everything he could.

When he reached his house he bathed and dressed, and felt momentarily better, and then sat down in solitude to think it out. How lonely and wretched the house was. The doors and windows were shut now and it was half-dark, and outside there was no sound but the ceaseless moan of the hot wind. Whatever he touched was parched and covered with dust. After some hours of anxious restless thought which

seemed to end in nothing, Guy could stand it no longer. Mrs. Aylmer lived close by, and the longing for sympathy and help was more than he could resist. She could be trusted, and she had met his mother, and knew something of the world. She might be able to show him a way out of his difficulties. Would Helen like him to go to Mrs. Aylmer? Perhaps not, if he asked her just now, but she would be glad of Mrs. Aylmer's help hereafter. Yes, he would go.

He walked over in the afternoon heat. Mrs. Aylmer was at home of course, and the very feeling of her cool dark drawing-room was a comfort to his spirit. When she came in a minute later, with her firm hand and friendly resolute eyes, Guy felt his burden was already lighter. She saw at once that he had something to say, and she helped him out. He found it much easier than he had expected. When he had told her everything, and made her, rather against her will, read his mother's letter, she sat for a time in silence, thinking. To her unconventional mind the position seemed clear enough. 'If they care for each other,' she thought, 'there is really nothing to prevent them marrying and being happy. They won't be rich, but they ought to manage well enough—if they care for each other. I wonder how long Harry and I would have hesitated if we had been in their place.' She smiled at the idea of any such thing standing between her and her husband, and Guy saw the smile go across her face.

‘Well,’ he said at last, ‘what do you think?’

Mrs. Aylmer gave him back his letter. ‘Mr. Langley, you won’t mind my speaking quite plainly?’

‘Of course not. That is just what I want you to do. Please say exactly what you think.’

‘Very well. Then I think it all depends on one thing. Do you really care for Miss Treveryan?’

‘If I had not cared for her I should not have asked her to marry me.’

‘I am not so sure. You may have cared for her enough to marry her if all went well, and yet not care very deeply in reality.’

‘That is not complimentary to me.’

‘Perhaps not, but I want to make quite sure. What is the very worst that could happen to you if you married? You might possibly be left with your profession and £200 a year. Isn’t that right?’

‘If my father died, and if he left me nothing; but that is very unlikely.’

‘No; I mean if he refused to agree to your marriage and stopped your allowance.’

‘He would never do that.’

‘But he could if he chose?’

‘Yes—of course he could; but he wouldn’t.’

‘If he did you could not remain in the Thirtieth. At all events, you could never go home with them?’

‘No, I suppose not.’

‘Well, when I say do you care for Miss Treveryan, I mean do you care for her enough to stick to her

even then, to give up your own people for her sake, if necessary, and to leave the regiment and stay in India?’

‘That is a long way off, and besides, Colonel Treveryan said he could help us.’

‘Just now, yes; but if anything happened to him she would have little or nothing?’

‘I believe not—not much anyhow.’

‘Very well—then it might possibly come to that?’

‘Yes, I suppose it might.’

‘If it did, do you care for her enough to marry her and not to repent your marriage afterwards, and let her know you repented it?’

‘I don’t believe my people would ever behave like that.’

‘But if they did? You really must face this, Mr. Langley, and not trust to chance.’

Guy was silent for a time; then he raised his head and met her eyes steadily, with a look of defiance in his own.

‘I should never repent it if Helen did not. I care more for her than all the world put together.’

Mrs. Aylmer was watching his face. What she saw and heard seemed to satisfy her. ‘Then I don’t see why you should be troubled. Make up your mind that you won’t let anything come between you. She won’t repent it if you don’t. You may take my word for that; and you know it as well as I do.’

‘Yes; I think I do. Then you don’t think we need be unhappy about this?’

‘Not in the least, if you really care for each other. But don’t deceive yourself about that.’

Guy got up, and came to her with his hand out. ‘Thank you a thousand times. You have made me happy again. I am so glad I came to you. You will help me through, won’t you?’

Mrs. Aylmer rose too, and took his proffered hand. ‘Yes, I will do all I can to help you, but you will be true to her? My only real doubt has been . . .’

‘Yes?’

‘You will not be vexed?’

‘No—nothing you could say would vex me.’

‘My only doubt has been whether you quite understood your own good luck. There are very few girls like her, Mr. Langley.’

In his present mood the words went straight to his heart. He did not resent them in the smallest degree—far from it. In a sense they were flattering to him, for they showed that others could see what a prize he had won. Moreover, just then he would have stood anything from Mrs. Aylmer. For the moment he was more than half in love with her as well as Helen. His eyes grew moist. ‘I know I am not worthy of her, and never can be,’ he said; ‘but I will try.’

When Guy left Mrs. Aylmer’s room, his courage had returned to him, and he wondered that it had ever fallen so low. She had promised to write to Lady

Mary herself. 'But I must see Miss Treveryan first,' she said with a smile; 'perhaps she will be glad of the chance of getting rid of you.' Guy met the suggestion with a happy laugh; he had no fears on that point.

When he was gone Mrs. Aylmer sat for a time thinking. 'I wonder whether I have done right,' she said to herself. 'I wonder whether he really cares for her? It is no business of mine either, and I daresay I shall get no thanks for meddling. Well, it can't be helped now. He is a dear boy, and she is too good to be made unhappy if I can do anything to stop it. What a pity she has no mother—poor child.' Mrs. Aylmer was a woman of action, and she felt that the sooner she saw Helen the better. Colonel Aylmer was at home, in his den, and she went to tell him about it; but before doing so she ordered her brougham. He took her news quietly enough, and made no objection. It was not their business, he said; but if his wife thought fit to take it up, he had no doubt she was right. Langley was a fine young fellow, and he could not have fallen in love with a nicer girl. 'If you do get a rap over the knuckles, you must make the best of it, and be more careful another time.'

When Mrs. Aylmer drove up to the Treveryans' door, she wished for a moment that she had kept out of the whole thing, but she had not much time for regret. Rather to her surprise she was told that Helen was at home, and she walked into the drawing-room and sat down. A minute later Helen came in, with a

smile on her face. Mrs. Aylmer could not help doubting for the moment whether the girl knew her own mind. Surely, if she cared for Guy Langley, she would have been more distressed and upset by the morning's news. Mrs. Aylmer did not know that Helen had half guessed her errand, and was meeting her resolutely, hoping for comfort, but determined to show no sign of suffering if her guess were wrong. 'How nice of you to come and see me,' Helen said brightly, with her hand out; and as she came close it was evident, in spite of her efforts to hide it, that she had been crying.

Mrs. Aylmer's heart smote her as she thought of the motherless girl alone in that big empty house. She kissed Helen gently. 'I came to help you, dear, if you will let me. Mr. Langley has been to see me to-day, and I thought perhaps I might be a little comfort to you.' She knew then that she had done right in coming. The flushing face, full of gratitude and hope, drove away all doubts.

Helen asked Mrs. Aylmer to come into her own sitting-room where they were secure from interruption, and there the two sat for an hour or more. As the elder woman's sympathy and gentleness won Helen's trust, her reserve disappeared and she laid bare all her sorrow. She told Mrs. Aylmer that she had been talking to Colonel Treveryan, and that it had been very miserable. He had been inclined to blame Guy, and had seemed very worried and upset. She had not known what to do, and she did not know now. She

could not say she did not care for Guy, or that she was ready to give him up if he was unchanged ; and yet she did not want to come between him and his people ; and she would not remain engaged to him for a single hour if it would be happier for him to be set free. ‘ Only, if that is to be the end,’ she said, with a momentary break in her voice, ‘ why did he make me care for him ? We were so happy before.’

Mrs. Aylmer drew the brown head on to her shoulder, and petted it as she would have petted a child’s. ‘ It won’t be the end, dear. All this will blow over in a few weeks, and you will be as happy as the day is long. You would never have doubted it if you had heard him speak to me to-day. He told me he cared for you more than all the world, and I am certain he does. It is your comfort and happiness that he is thinking of. He never expected this ; and of course it is very troublesome, but it will all blow over. You must never think of giving him up. You would only make him unhappy.’ So she went on, comforting the girl with gentle words, and telling her what she longed to hear, and was only too glad to believe, until the sore young heart was whole again, and the sad young eyes bright with happiness. Then she sent Helen to see whether Colonel Treveryan had done his work. ‘ He will think me a horrid meddlesome match-making woman, and very likely turn me out of the house, but I don’t care.’

Colonel Treveryan had done his work. It was half-

past five, and he was just coming into the drawing-room for some tea when Helen met him. He was looking very weary and sad. Throughout the day the remembrance of Helen had been before him, making his work doubly hard; and he had found himself thinking more bitterly than ever of the grave where his wife was lying. If she could only come back now for one hour, not for his sake, but for the sake of her child—the child whom she had loved so dearly and given up. Never! Never! She was far beyond the reach of his longing. Never again would he see the pale tired face and gentle patient eyes, and hear the low voice that had been music to him. ‘But for India,’ he thought, ‘she might be living now. Why did I let her come out to me?’ How many men have writhed under the torture of that thought, and cursed the land of exile?

Mrs. Aylmer found Colonel Treveryan by no means disposed to resent her interference. He knew too well the value of a woman’s help, and he liked Mrs. Aylmer herself. He spoke to her quite openly. He was hurt at the idea of his daughter being placed in such a position, and he said so; but he saw that her happiness was involved, and he made no secret of his hope that the marriage might not be broken off. He could, he said, give them five hundred a year, and would give them as much more as he could save after spending what it was his duty to spend in entertainment and the like. He was very glad to hear that Guy had spoken so strongly,

and seemed so determined in the matter. It seemed to him inconceivable that a man could hesitate in such a case. Eventually it was agreed that an effort should be made by Mrs. Aylmer and Guy to settle matters with Lady Mary, and that, in the meantime, the affair should be kept quiet. Helen was to go to Mussooree, and take care of Mabs and her French governess whom Mrs. Aylmer wanted to send to the hills at once. The young people were not to be forbidden to write to one another, but until things were settled it would be better to let others have no chance of talking.

Mrs. Aylmer went away that evening with a light heart, leaving Colonel Treveryan's brow cleared and Helen's eyes shining with happiness. Nevertheless, as she drove through the gathering darkness, enjoying the cool evening air which came through her window, she felt that there might be trouble ahead of her. She knew little of Lady Mary, but she had seen her and recognised in her a determined character. 'Well,' she thought, 'if her ladyship chooses to stand out, it is Mr. Langley's affair. He will have done all he can, and will be in the right. I daresay he can be pretty obstinate too if he is once roused; and really, they have not the smallest cause to object. It is quite as good a match as they could expect for him.'

A week later Helen was away among the pines and rhododendrons of Mussooree, and two letters

addressed to Lady Mary were on the high seas. Guy's letter was fuller and more circumstantial than his first had been. He dwelt upon his affection for Helen, and the impossibility of his giving her up; and he wrote at some length about Colonel Treveryan's position and services. He begged his father and mother not to make him miserable by continuing to withhold their consent. He did not in so many words declare his determination to stick to her whatever they might do, but he said no word which could be held to imply that his eventual decision would depend on theirs. Guy asked Lady Mary to show his letter to his father; and he referred to the fact that Mrs. Aylmer was going to write. 'You know her,' he said; 'she is not a bad judge, and she swears by Helen. If you don't trust my judgment, you can trust hers.'

Mrs. Aylmer's letter was as worldly wise as she could make it. She began by apologising for her interference in a matter with which she was not concerned. She would not have thought of interfering if Mr. Langley had not come to her of his own accord. As he had done so, and as he was in her husband's regiment, she hoped Lady Mary would not mind her writing and doing what she could to clear up matters. She could quite understand Lady Mary's reluctance to let Guy marry in India. Many of the girls one met out there were anything but desirable. But in this case she could assure Lady Mary that there was no

reason whatever for regret. Miss Treveryan was a charming girl in every way, thoroughly ladylike and refined, unusually well educated, and exceedingly pretty. Her father was a man of the highest reputation, and came of an old west-country family: He had served with distinction in the army, and was now holding a high position in India. He was not a rich man apparently, but during his life he was willing to allow his daughter £500 a year, and at his death she would no doubt have a little. Altogether, though Guy was young to marry, she could not help saying that he seemed to her to have made as good a choice as he could have made. He appeared to be thoroughly in earnest in the matter. She felt sure that if Lady Mary could bring herself to sanction the engagement, she would not repent it.

It was near the end of March when these letters were despatched. The answer could not come till they were well into May. In the meantime, as before, the uncertainty was trying to all concerned. Colonel Treveryan could not help feeling a little sore with Guy for having brought on the affair without being sure of his ground, and he could not help letting his feeling appear. He liked Guy, but he thought Helen in all respects Guy's equal, to say the least of it, and he resented the position for her. Guy felt he was blamed, and thought it hard, and at the same time he was conscious of a doubt as to the thoughtfulness of his behaviour. Helen felt humiliated by the

knowledge that she had given herself into a family who did not want her, and also at the idea that her position was probably known in Syntia.

It was not altogether a pleasant time for any of them.

CHAPTER XIX

TRYING TO DO RIGHT

THE drill season was over now, and the hot weather had fairly set in. All day long the westerly wind moaned about the silent houses. The air was full of driving dust which covered the trees and the earth with a yellow pall, and hid the blue sky though there was never a cloud. The earth was hard and cracked. The thin bony cattle found some kind of food on it, but there was not a sign of green in the burnt-up grass. Towards evening the wind dropped and the dust settled a little, and the white people came out of their closed houses to breathe the air, which was hot still, but endurable. It was a bad time for the poor women at the barracks and the sad languid children who could not ride or drive, and had nothing to do but to saunter about on the dusty grass.

Then as ever those got on best who were employed. Over in the Civil Station the work went on as usual. Colonel Treveryan and his assistants got through their daily task somehow, though the heat of their courts and offices was at times almost more than the European

brain and heart could bear. They solaced themselves with hard exercise, after the manner of Englishmen, riding and shooting and playing racquets and tennis. The jungles had been thinned now by the spring fires, and the game could be seen. Near the station, on the sandy river-bed, the quail were still plentiful; and the pig-sticking was at its best. In some ways the hot weather was bright enough. No one was away in camp, so that the Civil Station was full. There were always the evenings at the Club, and the friendly dinners, and the moonlight picnics. They got through life without much grumbling after all, though the thermometer was often near 100° in the shade, and one could not sleep at night except under a punkah.

Among the soldiers there was more idleness and more ill-health. Colonel Aylmer knew of old that in the heat of India there is no enemy so deadly as want of employment, and he tried hard to keep things going; but there was not much to do. Through the long afternoon many of the men lay on their cots, idle and miserable, cursing the day they were born; some of the officers gave in too, and suffered for it; Guy Langley and Dale, however, got on well enough. The latter was as keen and merry as ever, 'chivvying things' and playing racquets; and though Guy had fits of depression and repining against the injustice of his fate, he too found comfort in hard physical exercise. Then he had Mrs. Aylmer's steady sympathy to turn to, and his correspondence with Helen. No doubt

it was dreary work sometimes, particularly in the afternoon, when he felt too dull to take any pleasure in reading and sleep only made him worse. It was fairly cool, with the house shut up and the west wind blowing through the wet, sweet-scented *kuskus* mat, but it was dark and dreary ; and the dinners and the picnics seemed to him utterly lifeless without Helen's face to brighten them. However, on the whole, he did not find that the time went very slowly.

Up in Mussooree, among the pines and rhododendrons, Helen was living quietly with Mabs and the French governess. Some of Colonel Treveryan's friends were there for the summer, and they were glad to be kind to her, taking her out to dances and tennis-parties, and trying to make her life happy. They would have done it for her father's sake, and they soon came to do it for her own. It was a pleasure to have charge of a girl who was always well-dressed and well-behaved, and was ready to leave the pleasantest party at any moment with a cheery willingness which threw into strong contrast the discontented looks of others. Both with young and old she was soon a favourite, and the budding warriors who got away from their regiments at the beginning of the leave-season were soon crowding round the tall graceful girl who looked so handsome and danced so well ; but Helen took their admiration very calmly. She was cheery and open and frank with all of them, but she seemed in no way overwhelmed by their attentions, or eager

to be in the thick of the fun. She was young enough to enjoy herself at times among the bright faces that thronged the 'Happy Valley'; but her heart was often sadder than a young heart should be. In her present mood she found more comfort in the society of Mabs and Rex than in the pony races and the dances; and many an afternoon, when she might have been among the young men and maidens, she was wandering with the child about the wooded hillsides. Mademoiselle Dufour, the French governess, was a quiet, rather dull woman, who found Mabs a handful and was always glad to be rid of her for a time. She used to get away then and enjoy her only pleasure, poor lady,—a chat with a compatriot who was also a governess in a family at Mussooree. Before long Helen and Mabs became very close friends. Mabs liked Guy Langley, as all children did, and sometimes she used to talk about him. This in itself was a bond of union, and they had others.

So the time passed until the middle of May, and then at last came Lady Mary's answer. It was one about which there could be no possibility of mistake.

When she first received Guy's letter, and Mrs. Aylmer's, Lady Mary had hesitated in her purpose. Her native good sense was not yet wholly extinguished by years of successful tyranny over the wills of others; and for a moment she had dimly recognised the danger of further opposition. Her husband had more than once expressed his doubts. Now Mrs. Aylmer had

built her a golden bridge; should she accept it, and retire with honour from a position which was really untenable if seriously attacked? Unhappily her hesitation was shortlived. Since she had written to Guy, she had allowed her mind to dwell upon the idea of bringing about an engagement between him and Clara Schneider. Guy's indiscretion had made her feel that it was desirable to get him safely married, and the more she thought over it the more the plan grew upon her. In all ways it would be an excellent thing for him. The girl was a good girl, and she had, or would have, eight or ten thousand a year. He could not do better. Lady Mary had now made up her mind to this scheme, and she could not give it up. Moreover, the thought of these women coming between her and Guy was unendurable. It would have been bad enough to have her plans upset; but to have them upset in this way; to have her clear warning set aside, and Guy encouraged to dispute her will, that was not to be borne. The girl's behaviour she could understand. Of course she would do what she could to catch Guy and keep him, but Mrs. Aylmer ought to have known better. Her interference was simply impertinent, and she should be made to understand it.

Once started, Lady Mary rapidly worked herself up to a state of fiery wrath. The thing she could least endure was insubordination. It enraged and blinded her, and made her fight wildly. Unluckily, a few hours only after Guy's letter arrived, she received

from another source some information which increased her anger, and completely removed all doubt from her mind. A friend of hers, Mrs. Danby, had a brother who was holding one of the highest positions in India, and Lady Mary had written to her in the hope of getting Guy an appointment on the great man's staff. She had not mentioned her real reason, but had said that he was quartered in Syntia, a dreadful place, very hot and solitary, and that she wanted to get him out of it. The poor boy would be moped to death.

Mrs. Danby's answer was cordial. She would gladly write to her brother. 'I wonder whether I have guessed,' she added, 'why you are anxious to get your boy away from that horrid place. When I was staying a few weeks ago with Jane Pitt Wright, whom I think you know, she told me she had just heard from that clever son of hers, and that he had been shooting there with some Indian man, and had been positively so hunted by the daughter that he had been obliged to pack up his boxes and run away. I wonder whether she has transferred her attentions to your boy. It is quite shameful the way these people are allowed to go on.' It really was too bad. There could be no doubt of the fact. She could remember that Guy had once mentioned Pitt Wright as staying with the Treveryans. Now she was asked to let him marry this bold unprincipled girl, who was probably as bad as she could be; and the story of Guy's folly must be

made known to every one. She felt angry and humiliated, and she felt that she did well to be angry. Poor Helen! It was a dirty trick that her guest played her when he shook hands and looked into her honest eyes, and gave over that lying letter to her charge; but men do these things sometimes—English men.

This time Lady Mary did not go through the farce of making her husband write. She was too much in earnest, and he was really too stupid. But for Mrs. Danby's letter he would have seriously advised a compromise, if not surrender. So her ladyship sat down to her work, and, as Chimp would have said, 'let herself rip.' She could still write affectionately. Though she was stern and clear, she yet knew the value of a few loving words as an appeal to Guy's feelings, and she would not believe that a few months could be enough to overthrow her empire and make another better loved than herself. If Colonel Treveryan had thought it strange that he should be so quickly supplanted, it was natural that she should think such a thing impossible.

MY DEAREST GUY—I have received your letter of the —th March, and it has made me more unhappy than I can say. It is impossible that I can ever change my decision about this miserable business. In fact, I have even more reason for it now than I had before. I know you believe all that you say about Miss Treveryan, and perhaps you will be hurt with me for telling you the truth; but, my boy, she is not fit to be your wife. You remember that

young Pitt Wright was staying with these people a few months ago? I have now learned on the best possible authority that they took advantage of having got him into their house in order to try and entrap him, and that she literally gave him no peace until at last he was forced to go off quite suddenly to avoid open unpleasantness. As she cannot get him, she has transferred her attentions to you. You see I know more of what has been going on than you knew yourself; and I have good reason for saying what I said to you before, that such a marriage is out of the question. Now, my boy, I beg of you to come home to me at once. I can explain things to you more clearly in five minutes' talk than I could do in any number of letters. Don't let yourself be influenced by any feeling of duty to a girl who has behaved so badly to you, and don't permit Mrs. Aylmer to interfere in the matter. It is no affair of hers, and I am astonished at her presuming to write to me about it as she has done. I never cared about her, but I thought she had more sense. Remember what I wrote to you before. Even if this girl were all you think her, it would be impossible for you to marry her. Your father and I know too well what misery such a marriage would entail, and we can never consent to it. If you were to persevere in disregarding our wishes, which I know you will not do, you would have nothing left to you but your own small means, for your father would at once withdraw the allowance he now gives you. Do, my darling boy, trust my love and care for you, and come back to me. You may think me unkind now, but you will live to see how right I was, and to thank God for your escape. It is the *knowledge* that I am doing what is right which enables me to be firm in inflicting pain upon you. The girls are well, and send you their best love. Roland is getting on very well at college.—Ever your loving

MOTHER.

Guy read this letter with rage in his heart. 'Cowardly brute!' he said, with his teeth set. Then a doubt flashed across his mind, from outside as it

were, whether there could be any truth in the story. He drove the doubt away instantly, with disgust, remembering Helen's eyes and voice; they could not deceive. How he hated that man, for the baseness of the lie, he thought; really, perhaps, in part, because Pitt Wright had despised the woman he loved, and made him seem weak and contemptible.

The letter to Mrs. Aylmer was as follows—

DEAR MADAM—I have received your letter of the —th March. You are right in supposing that your interference in this matter appears to me wholly unnecessary. I must decline therefore to continue the correspondence, and can only regret that before offering your opinion with regard to my son's private affairs you did not think it desirable to make more careful inquiries about the character and antecedents of the young woman to whom your letter alludes.—I remain, yours faithfully,

MARY LANGLEY.

Mrs. Aylmer put down this letter with a dangerous glitter in her brown eyes. 'What intolerable insolence!' she said. 'Who is Lady Mary that she should dare to write to me like this?' Then she repressed herself and laughed, a rather grim laugh. 'Well,' she thought, 'it is a lesson to me with a vengeance. Never again will I interfere in other people's affairs. But what a vulgar letter to write! Even if I was wrong in trying to help them, she might have been decently civil. I thought she was a lady at least. I wonder what she means about Helen. Some nonsense she has heard, I suppose.' Mrs. Aylmer was honest, and admitted to herself that

she had laid herself open to the rebuff; but Mrs. Aylmer was human, and she resented it none the less. Lady Mary had made a mistake in letting her imperious temper vent itself upon a woman who was quite as determined as she was. From that time Mrs. Aylmer, who also thought herself in the right, fought against her *con amore*.

Guy came over after dinner, and asked her whether she had received a letter from his mother. She said yes, and he was too much engrossed with his own feelings to ask any further questions. 'Then you know her answer to me,' he said. 'Well, I have been thinking it all over, and I have come to the conclusion that the only thing left now is to take my own line. I am very sorry my mother cannot see it in the right light, but I cannot let this interfere with Helen's happiness. I shall write and tell her so, and ask Helen to have me as I am.' He spoke a little pompously, with a touch of affected calm in his voice. As a matter of fact, he was not perhaps quite so determined as he wished to appear. He had come expecting that his announcement would be received with surprise, that Mrs. Aylmer would be a little alarmed at the prospect, and inclined to argue about it, or at all events to advise consideration and caution. In any case she would think it somewhat heroic of him, and applaud his unselfishness and resolution. This being his view, he was just a little disappointed to find the sacrifice taken very quietly. His tone had

jarred upon Mrs. Aylmer, and it made her reply seem cold.

‘I don’t see that you can do anything else,’ she said. ‘You have gone as far as you can in trying to make things run smooth. Now, if Helen will have you, and Colonel Treveryan allows it, your conscience is clear and you have a perfect right to please yourself.’

This was not quite what Guy had expected, but he answered pleasantly; and very soon they were talking it over in entire agreement. Finally Guy asked what his mother had said to Mrs. Aylmer. She hesitated, and then produced Lady Mary’s letter. After all, why should he not see it?

As Guy read it, he felt his face grow hot. ‘I am awfully sorry,’ he said. ‘I never dreamt of your being exposed to this kind of thing,’ and his indignation was aroused against his mother. It is almost always a mistake to be rude.

Next morning Guy rode over to see Colonel Treveryan, who was ready with his answer. ‘My dear fellow,’ he said, when he had heard Guy out, ‘I thought this was not impossible. The end of it is that you can’t count upon anything beyond your pay and two hundred a year.’

‘Yes, sir, I suppose so.’

‘You can’t live on that as a married man in the Thirtieth.’

‘No.’

‘Then what do you intend to do now?’

‘I thought, sir—you were good enough to say that you would help us at first.’

‘Yes, I did say so, and if my daughter has not changed her mind I am still willing to do it. I have no one else to think of now, and even when I retire I suppose I can always manage to find her five hundred a year. I shall not want much myself; but you see that depends on my life. If I were to die, she would have very little. What would you do then?’

‘I hope there is no chance of that, sir; and besides, I believe my people will give in sooner or later. They’re awfully fond of me, really.’

‘No doubt; but they might not. If it came to the worst how could you manage?’

Guy sat looking at a picture on Colonel Treveryan’s wall—a couple of men driving to cover in a high dog-cart. At last he said, ‘There would always be one way, sir; I could go in for the Indian service.’

‘Are you willing to face the chance of having to do that?’

‘You did it, sir; why shouldn’t I? And I would do anything in the world for her.’

Colonel Treveryan looked at him hard. He seemed earnest and truthful. ‘Very well, Langley. I will abide by Helen’s decision. If she still wishes it, I will give her what I have said. I shall write and tell her so to-day.’

‘Thank you, sir. I am very grateful to you,’ Guy said. ‘I don’t care what happens if only she will have me.’

He rode off with joy in his heart. After all, why should he worry? His mother was sure to come round, and meanwhile they would have enough. It would be all right. Directly he got home he sat down to write to Helen.

MY DARLING—I wish I had better news to give you; but I hope that you will not after all think my news so very bad. My mother still refuses to agree to our engagement. She says we cannot live on what we have, and that it would end in misery. She also tells me plainly that if we are married my father will stop my allowance, and that I shall never get anything beyond what I have of my own. I have been over to see your father and tell him this, and he has been very good and generous about it. He says that if you will have me, he will not stand in my way, and that he will give you five hundred a year so long as he lives. With what I have, that will be plenty to begin upon, so you will write to me now and tell me that my long waiting is over? It has been so hard—almost more than I could bear sometimes. I can’t imagine why my mother is so unreasonable about this; but you know what mothers are. She will come round in time I am certain, and, anyhow, we have done all we could. I do not care a straw what happens to me, if only I have you and your love. There is nothing I would not give up, gladly and proudly, in exchange for that. It almost made me laugh when your father asked me whether I was prepared, if necessary, to give up the regiment and go into the Indian service. It seemed such a little thing in comparison with you. My darling, I am afraid I was very hasty when I first wrote to you. I ought to have thought of all these things before; but you will not be hard upon me for overlooking them? It was

my love for you that drove out of my head every other consideration. And you will not think less of me now if I come to you with little besides my sword? I know you will not. Write soon, and believe me ever your own

GUY.

Colonel Treveryan's letter was affectionate and businesslike. He told Helen exactly how matters stood, and spoke kindly of Guy's behaviour in the matter. What was the use of blaming the boy if she loved him? And really he was not much to blame after all. Colonel Treveryan begged her to think it all over very carefully before she answered, but he assured her that if she were still of the same mind, there was no cause for hesitation. He could quite well afford to make them the allowance he had offered. As to Langley's people, they probably would come round, and he would not lose anything in the end by his marriage. In any case he was apparently earnest in his desire to win her, and quite ready, if necessary, to make up his mind to an Indian career, which would remove all difficulties. They would never be rich, but they would have enough, even if he were to die, 'Which,' he added, 'I have no present intention of doing if I can help it.'

The two letters reached Helen one morning after breakfast, and they aroused in her a painful conflict of feeling. After reading them, she put on her hat and walked out of the house. Mabs was 'practising' with Mademoiselle Dufour, and though she had a nice firm touch for so small a child, the sound of her piano per-

vaded the house in a rather distracting manner. Rex followed Helen, as he always did, and the two of them went away by a stony path through the wood until they reached a place where Helen often sat. There was a broken gap in the trees below, and looking down through it one could see the plain of the Dera Dun, and the jagged peaks of the low range beyond.

It was a quiet spot where Helen knew she would be alone, and as she sat down in the shade there was hardly a sound to break the stillness about her. The rainless hot weather had lasted some months now, and though on the heights the air was comparatively cool, the hillsides looked very brown and bare. The crimson blossoms of the rhododendrons had long disappeared from the woods. The snowy peaks to the northward were hidden by the summer haze, and there was a dull yellow glare over the plains to the south. Mussooree itself was dry and dusty.

Helen took out the two letters again and read them carefully, word by word, and then she sat for an hour or more gazing out through the interlaced branches of the trees, deep in thought. Now and then she altered her position unconsciously, crossing her gauntleted hands over her knee, or joining them in her lap, or leaning her head upon them, and every time she moved Rex opened his eyes and looked up at her without raising his head from the ground. Her face seemed sad and troubled, as if she were working out some problem that was too hard for her, as indeed she was—a

motherless girl with all the romance of girlhood in her heart. At last she put her face down upon her hands and burst into tears; Rex whined and got up and pushed his head into her lap; then she brushed her tears away and controlled herself. 'Dear old Rex,' she said, with her face working, and her big eyes full; 'I have always got daddy and you; haven't I? and that is a great deal more than I deserve, my king. I am going to be very brave, and not let the noblest man in all the world sacrifice himself for my sake.' And then it all came over her again suddenly, and the brown head went down, and the sobs came thick and fast. 'Oh, I can't, I can't, Guy, my darling; I cannot give you up.' The storm of grief swept over her and left her, and when she got up she was calm again and there was a resolute, almost cheerful, look in her eyes. What woman is there who is not capable of that exaltation of spirit when she is sacrificing herself for the man she loves?

She walked home with her head up and her graceful figure erect as ever, and went straight to her room. The post for Syntia left in the evening; she would not delay. What had to be done had better be done at once before she faltered again. The words came to her readily, and she felt strong and almost happy. 'I am doing right, and God is helping me,' she thought, in her simple, natural faith.

MY DEAREST—What I am going to say will give you pain, but some day you will see that I was right, and this makes me

able to say it. I cannot accept the sacrifice you are ready to make for me. It would be a cruel thing to take advantage of your unselfishness and let you throw away everything to make me happy. If your mother's answer had been different, you know how gladly I should have done whatever you wished, but I cannot come between you and her, and cut you off from all your own people. I should always feel I had done wrong, and in time you might come to hate me for it, and we should both be miserable. I could not bear that. We shall not be very happy now just at first, for I know you do care for me ; but you will soon see that it was best for you, and once I know that you are content I shall be so. Don't ever think of me. I shall always be glad and proud to think that I was something to you once, and that I was not selfish enough to ruin your life. Now, good-bye. Send me one line to let me know that you understand me and forgive me, but don't try to make me change my mind. I know it would be wrong, and I cannot do it. God bless you, and make you very happy some day. HELEN.

This letter was duly despatched the same evening, with one to Colonel Treveryan, telling him what Helen had done. She said that she had thought it over very carefully, and felt it would be wrong to accept Guy's offer. She had therefore told him so, and everything was at an end between them. 'So you will have me turning up again, daddy, like a bad halfpenny, and will have to make up your mind to keep me for good.' Her self-sacrifice was none the less true and brave for the fact that she sobbed herself to sleep that night after hours of despairing grief, the grief which comes only to the young ; and if at times, during the next two days, she felt a sudden passionate regret for what she had done, and entertained for a moment a hope that she

might not be taken at her word, yet she would not, if she could, have withdrawn her letter.

Mademoiselle Dufour and Mabs noticed her altered looks, and Mabs was evidently concerned about her. Helen saw the child gazing at her with serious eyes, and when Mademoiselle Dufour left the room after breakfast the first day, Helen found a little hand stealing into hers. 'Are you sure there's nothing the matter, auntie? You look so sad, like mummie did when Uncle Charlie died.'

Helen caught the child up and kissed her, and laughed off the question; but Mabs went away unconvinced, and more than once Helen found the serious blue eyes fixed upon her again.

Mademoiselle discouraged the subject. 'Miss Treveryan has de headeck,' she said.

And Mabs answered, 'She wouldn't cry just because she had a headache; and I know she's been crying. It's awful fag having a headache, of course, but English people don't cry for those sort of things.' With Mademoiselle Dufour Mabs was always patriotic; and in familiar conversation her language generally bore some traces of her last letter from her brother, who was at school in England.

Guy Langley's first feeling when he received Helen's letter was one of surprise which rapidly changed into one of alarmed impatience. He thought Helen cared too much for him to resist successfully if he pressed her with all his strength, but he was not perfectly sure.

There were hidden depths in her nature which he had not yet sounded. She was not yet his own. The doubt and the opposition incited him, and made him all the warmer in his resolve. He could not, at the first check, go back from all he had said, and seem light and changeable. If she had been put out of his reach by some power against which it was hopeless to contend, he would no doubt have resigned himself before long to the inevitable, and possibly, in time, he might have come to feel that it was better so. But this was a different thing. He could not let her put him aside. Love, and pride, and obstinacy, and an inherited dislike of opposition, and a sense of chivalrous pity for Helen, combined to urge him forward.

His answer was masterful, and yet humble. Instinct teaches most men to blend the two things in dealing with women. 'I will not accept your answer,' he wrote; 'I will never accept it. You have confessed that you love me; and having once confessed that, you have no right to ask me to give you up. It would be a folly and a wickedness to ruin both our lives in order to humour my mother, who is not in a position to judge, and nothing will ever induce me to agree to it. Does not your own Bible tell you that a man will give up father and mother and cleave to his wife? If you have any other reason for what you have written, if you have lost trust in me, and feel that I am unworthy of you, then I will submit without another word. So long as I live I will be

loyal to every wish of yours ; but the thought is such intolerable misery that I implore you, if indeed you do love me still, not to leave me in doubt an hour longer than necessary. Yet, if that is your true reason, if you no longer feel for me what you once felt, do not hesitate to tell me so. I can bear any pain that your dear hands inflict upon me. I shall never for one moment reproach you or regret that I loved you. You have given me a happiness nothing can ever take from me.'

Poor Helen ! She had meant to be very brave and determined, but Guy's answer made it cruelly hard, and her resolution was further shaken by a letter which she received from Mrs. Aylmer. It was a little loving note. 'You are the dearest girl in the world,' Mrs. Aylmer said, 'but indeed you are wrong in this. He is very fond of you, and if he ever accepted your decision, which, by the way, I am sure he won't, you would only have made him wretched as well as yourself. His mother will see reason sooner or later, and in any case she has no right to come between you. I should think very badly of him if he allowed her to do so. He ought to be, and is, proud of having won you, and you have a perfect right to please yourselves. You will not be doing him harm, but, on the contrary, bringing him great happiness ; and some day you will wonder that you ever doubted it. You may trust me, dear. I would not say it if I did not believe it. Don't think it must necessarily be right to do whatever is

hard and painful to you. We were not sent into this world to make ourselves miserable. And don't be angry with me for interfering. I feel as if you were my big daughter, and I can't help trying to keep you from spoiling your own life.'

Helen did not answer that day. She could not do so. She felt unable to come to any decision. It seemed to her as if she had been left without guidance. She had meant to do right, and it had been so hard. Could all that striving and sorrow have been unnecessary and useless, and even foolish and wrong? If only Aunt Madge had been alive! It was not the poor loving mother of whom she thought in her distress; she had never known her mother. The pale tired face and the patient eyes had passed out of her life when she was little more than a baby; when a brave, heart-broken woman had driven away alone through the stone gateway at Laneithin into the darkness and rain of the desolate Cornish roads, leaving behind, to forget her, the child she would have died for.

Helen Treveryan was awake far into the night, fighting her battle alone; but there could be only one end to such a conflict. At last, as she knelt by her bedside, her hands clasped before her, and her beautiful earnest face white with suffering, while the lamp-light fell like a glory about the bright brown hair, conviction and peace came to her, and she ceased to struggle against her happiness. She rose with shining eyes and a deep joy in her heart. It was

long past midnight, and everything was silent as she walked to her window and drew aside the curtain. The night was fine and still, and the stars clear. She could see the dark rounded outlines of the hills against the sky, and a single light gleamed faintly from a house among the trees to the northward. She stood a few minutes at the window, with her hand on the curtain, and then came back to her writing-table and sat down. This time she wrote a few words only—

MY DEAREST—I cannot try to be brave any more. I have never changed for an instant. How could I think you anything but good and true and unselfish when you are giving up so much for me? You said your mother pressed you to go home. I want you to write by this mail and say you will go directly, if you can get leave. When you come back, if you still want me, I will come to you whether she will have me or not. I only hope I am not doing wrong. I shall never forgive myself if I find in the end that I have brought you unhappiness. Please don't refuse to go home. I could not be happy unless I felt I had done all in my power to prevent things going wrong. You will not distress me by refusing?—Ever your own

HELEN.

END OF VOL. I.

MACMILLAN'S THREE-AND-SIXPENNY SERIES

OF

WORKS BY POPULAR AUTHORS.

In Crown 8vo. Cloth extra. Price 3s. 6d. each.

By Sir SAMUEL BAKER.

TRUE TALES FOR MY GRANDSONS.

By ROLF BOLDREWOOD.

SATURDAY REVIEW.—"Mr. Boldrewood can tell what he knows with great point and vigour, and there is no better reading than the adventurous parts of his books."

PALL MALL GAZETTE.—"The volumes are brimful of adventure, in which gold, gold-diggers, prospectors, claim-holders, take an active part."

ROBBERY UNDER ARMS.
THE MINER'S RIGHT.
A COLONIAL REFORMER.

THE SQUATTER'S DREAM.
A SYDNEY-SIDE SAXON.
NEVERMORE.

By FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT.

LOUISIANA; AND THAT LASS O' LOWRIE'S.

By HUGH CONWAY.

MORNING POST.—"Life-like and full of individuality."

DAILY NEWS.—"Throughout written with spirit, good feeling, and ability, and a certain dash of humour."

LIVING OR DEAD?

A FAMILY AFFAIR.

By Mrs. CRAIK.

(The Author of "JOHN HALIFAX, GENTLEMAN.")

OLIVE. With Illustrations by G. BOWERS.

THE OGILVIES. With Illustrations.

AGATHA'S HUSBAND. With Illustrations.

HEAD OF THE FAMILY. With Illustrations.

TWO MARRIAGES.

THE LAUREL BUSH.

MY MOTHER AND I. With Illustrations.

MISS TOMMY: A Mediæval Romance. Illustrated.

KING ARTHUR: Not a Love Story.

SERMONS OUT OF CHURCH.

MACMILLAN & CO., BEDFORD STREET,
STRAND, LONDON.

MACMILLAN'S THREE-AND-SIXPENNY SERIES

OF

WORKS BY POPULAR AUTHORS.

In Crown 8vo. Cloth extra. Price 3s. 6d. each.

By F. MARION CRAWFORD.

SPECTATOR.—"With the solitary exception of Mrs. Oliphant we have no living novelist more distinguished for variety of theme and range of imaginative outlook than Mr. Marion Crawford."

MR. ISAACS: A Tale of Modern India. Portrait of Author.

DR. CLAUDIUS: A True Story.

A ROMAN SINGER.

ZOROASTER.

MARZIO'S CRUCIFIX.

A TALE OF A LONELY PARISH.

PAUL PATOFF.

WITH THE IMMORTALS.

GREIFENSTEIN.

SANT' ILARIO.

A CIGARETTE-MAKER'S ROMANCE.

By Sir HENRY CUNNINGHAM, K.C.I.E.

ST. JAMES'S GAZETTE.—"Interesting as specimens of romance, the style of writing is so excellent—scholarly and at the same time easy and natural—that the volumes are worth reading on that account alone. But there is also masterly description of persons, places, and things; skilful analysis of character; a constant play of wit and humour; and a happy gift of instantaneous portraiture."

THE CERULEANS.

THE HERIOTS.

WHEAT AND TARES.

By CHARLES DICKENS.

THE PICKWICK PAPERS. With 50 Illustrations.

OLIVER TWIST. With 27 Illustrations.

NICHOLAS NICKELBY. With 44 Illustrations.

MARTIN CHUZZLEWIT. With 41 Illustrations.

THE OLD CURIOSITY SHOP. With 97 Illustrations.

BARNABY RUDGE. With 76 Illustrations.

By LANOE FALCONER.

CECILIA DE NOËL.

By W. WARDE FOWLER.

A YEAR WITH THE BIRDS. Illustrated by BRYAN HOOK.

TALES OF THE BIRDS. Illustrated by BRYAN HOOK.

By the Rev. JOHN GILMORE.

STORM WARRIORS.

MACMILLAN & CO., BEDFORD STREET,
STRAND, LONDON.



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA



3 0112 045824114